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PRAYER AND THE HUMAN PROBLEM

PRAYER AND THE HUMAN PROBLEM

BY THE REV.

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PREFACE

THIS volume has grown out of early morning quietude, during some months of enforced holiday spent upon a mountain in Central China, and later upon the Canadian shores of the Pacific, when sacred thoughts came almost unbidden, and claimed a lodgment. Some few of these thoughts had been partly sketched out and published, in papers written rapidly amidst the tasks of an engrossing Chinese editorship, but are given here, with the rest, in a more leisurely fashion.

Carlyle makes his Professor Teufelsdröckh say of himself: "In most colleges have I studied, except Chinese mandarin ones"; a statement which must be modified as regards the present writer. For in his case no little energy has been spent, for more than a score of years, in gaining a close acquaintance with the philosophical essence of that library of ancient literature which, until recent days, has furnished all the schooling of the Chinese mandarin. And while, with us of the West, Xenophon and Plato, Cicero and Marcus Aurelius, together with

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the Bible, are quoted (by the British Board of Education, for instance, in a booklet of 1910) as "best adapted for an introduction to the deepest problems of ethics and conduct," it may be affirmed that the names of at least two ancient Chinese ponderers deserve to be added to those from Greece and Rome. As the writers of the classical lands of Europe have figured so largely in our treatises on religion and ethics, it seems but due to the two earliest philosophical writers of Asia that, in these days of intellectual hospitality, they also should find a definite place in our cognisance.

Some parts of the present work have to do with great familiar commonplaces of truth, but often form a new perspective. Other portions deal with what may be considered new regions of thought, where it is remembered that sincerity, not omniscience, is our moral duty. And throughout the whole there has been the guidance of a homely Chinese adage: "Ascending a hill one should start from its foot." It is in the ordinary and familiar truths that we find the basis of those which are less ordinary, and perhaps unfamiliar to many.

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NATURE AND THE HUMAN PROBLEM

"Teach us the lesson of the trees."

R. L. Stevenson, *Prayers written at Vailima.*

I

NATURE AND THE HUMAN PROBLEM

Looking forth from the window of a country homestead in early autumn, through the pearl-mists of dawn, where perhaps a clump of solemn pine-trees in the foreground is balanced at mid-distance by thatched roofs of cottages, just appearing above a shrub-grown knoll, with blue smoke straight-ascending from a chimney or two, these and the lesser elements in the scene before us cease to be isolated quantities, they are all gathered together in one scheme of relative intensities, receding through many a half-tone into grey distance; and the horizon merges into the sky, so that there is no dividing line 'twixt earth and heaven, but all is harmonious connectedness.

To an artistic eye there is before us a picture-poem worthy of the canvas; and for the spiritual senses a picture-hint of the cherished designs of God, whose unimpeded workmanship is ever a poem, and whose completed work will be the epic

of the ages—the abolition of all disseverance, and the blending of all things earthly and heavenly into one harmonious whole.

Before long, outside our window, figures of farm-labourers appear on the scene, enhancing the outlook with suggestions of human activity. "Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening"; adding, if he labour aright, the master-touch to the manifold works of creation. And how wonderful those works! And what wonders lie latent in every human soul!

The chasm of sky above our head, apart from the placid emotions which it brings to us from its tender gradations of tint, may well over-awe the mind with the eternal mystery of space—without beginning or end, into which we may look for ever, only to lose ourselves at last. The clouds, from of old, have symbolised a second mystery—of force, blessing the crops or threatening the harvest. The trees and herbs are a greater mystery still—for they live. And in the rustic forms of the farm-labourers there is enshrined the greatest mystery of all—the mystery of will and passion. It has engaged the energies of legislators ever since the earliest days of tribal rule, of moralists ever since the rise of ancient civilisation, of religionists from the earliest dawn of a sense of the infinite. It has been the source

of all the problems of history, and of a great problem for God Himself—the problem of lifting human nature to the level of those principles that are eternally salutary and necessary.

Otherwise it is the note of placid harmony, pervading the scene before us, which captivates the senses. Nor is that harmony for the eye alone. It lies far deeper than all surface-seeming. It exists apart from the bridal veil of mist which so well becomes the face of Nature, in her wedding with Aurora. It depends not upon the arrangement of pictorial elements. It would have been there, for the mind to grasp, however ill-sorted the masses of light and shade. It is to be found in every molecule, and atom, and electron. Each minutest particle of matter might say to its Creator: "Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: And in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom."

The mind of the multitude needs some extraordinary scene or occurrence to awaken its faculty of wonder, but the heart of the thoughtful finds scope for wonderment in things that are quite ordinary and commonplace. Our abode is ever on the borders of infinitude, and every vista of thought shades off into the ineffable. Like a certain English poet in his childhood, we set forth to seek the horizon—finding much indeed, but never

finding that. In his own language that little lad started off to discover the place where the heavens touched the earth; until at length, weary and footsore, he learned that the sky was as far off in every place as it was from his starting-point. But those who have any consciousness of the Divine may learn instead to realise that the heaven of heavens is as near to them just where they are as to any remoter part of Nature that they might explore. Primæval forests to some, the everlasting mountain-peaks to others, appear to be likely regions for contact with the infinite. But the meeting-point of Heaven and earth is very nigh us—mystic, wonderful—in every place where we reside. The harmonic grouping of vast shapes or of pictorial masses in certain places, but reminds us that everywhere matter, mind, Spirit are interrelated, and are destined to form a chord of harmonic quietude; a chord which, with all its simplicity of appeal, is composed of notes that are each of them most wonderfully mysterious.

An *Edinburgh Reviewer* of earlier days (1838) would take us back to the elementary consideration that the mere principle of existence in a common stone or drop of water is itself an inscrutable wonder. "A grain of sand, being a fact, a reality, rises before us as something prodigious, immeasurable—a fact that opposes and counter-

balances the immensities of non-existence." And if, to such a rudimentary thought we add the unfoldings of modern science—those apocalyptic visions of a miniature universe in every particle of soil, or molecule of water, or atom of air, we find therein ample material for a new book of Revelation, never devoid of mystic sacredness. For " matter in its last analysis is found to be a mode of Force, and Force when analysed is the expression of Will, and Will is the quality of a Person." * From the nearest atom to the utmost verge of universal space, we find ourselves confronted, not only by the presence of Mind, but of the same Mind.

And what a Mind! Concerning its infinite patience throughout immeasurable ages, when the stuff of our earth was being moulded and prepared, Geology teaches us much.

> In fire and frost, in ocean tossed,
> God ground the rock to goodly soil,
> Nor deemed the long millenniums lost,
> If earth might bless the plowman's toil.

And when Geology ceases to be our guide, then Bacteriology, so hopelessly prosaic as it seems, would bid us behold in each brown clod a poem of gracious activity. For one of the necessary elements in a fertile soil, the element nitrogen, was hardly

* Dr. W. H. Fitchett, *Fernley Lecture*, 1905, p. 6.

to be found in the primal rocks from which the soil was formed. And until it had been introduced there, in a tangible form, there could be no grain or fruit for the supply of man's needs. The whole existence of the human race must have remained for ever unrealised, until that which seemed a mere diluent to the oxygen in the air was converted into a definite food-stuff. And so it was arranged that certain lower bacteria should lodge in the roots of the wild clover, and the leguminosæ in general, to import nitrogen from the atmosphere into the humus, in the form of salts which should be available for those plants, and all manner of herbs and cereals—from whence the browsing animals, and men also, might gain it for their necessities.

Science, with its collection of desiccated facts, labelled and classified as though for the shelves of a museum, seems at first sight opposed to everything sacred. But only at first sight, for in the end, Science is the great unveiler of the art of God.

The sweet morning air is itself a marvel of adjustment to the contrasting needs of plants and animals. A devout scientist * once wrote at length on this wonderfully solved problem, which, as he shows, might have baffled the intellect of angels. And

* Prof. George Wilson, in his *Religio Chemici*.

many another has dwelt upon the gentle equipoise of huge forces, through which life on earth is rendered possible.

From the humbler vegetation to the frowning pines, stately with a depth of awe and memory of the tempests, we note a full response to the whole scheme of provision for life and growth. There is the power to grip the soil and defy the storm; to absorb the moisture and salts from below, and to gain solidity from the invisible air around, by processes which excel all the refinements of our laboratory work. There is the translation of celestial light-force and heat-force into energies of sap-pumping and cell-building. There is a correspondence with the plant's whole environment, and a resultant growth in strength and beauty; which twain, to the mind of one of our most ardent lovers of Nature, are never dissociated, and never wanting. He exclaims: "Earth is always beautiful—always. Even without colour or leaf, or sunshine, or song of bird and flutter of butterfly's wing; without anything sensuous, without advantage and gilding of summer, the power is ever there." *

As to the farm-labourers, one who studied them as deeply as any have studied the heart of passionless Nature, Jean François Millet, found in them

* Richard Jeffries, *Field and Hedgerow*, "Hours of Spring."

the chief centre for his artistic devotion. Possessed of marked abilities as a landscape painter, he made all forms of landscape subordinate to them. He says: "You watch figures in the fields digging and delving with spade and pick. You see one of them from time to time straightening his loins, and wiping his face with the back of his hand. It is there that for me you must seek true humanity and great poetry." And we may assent that "the dignity of labour" is by no means an out-worn phrase. Those labourers, in whom he found the fullest comradeship, have been fulfilling one great law of the universe, that every consumer should be a producer—of some sort or other.* For we descend in the scale of existence, not ascend, when our only resemblance to the flowers of the field is that we toil not, neither do we spin.

Irresponsible luxury once had its day in Europe, and its glorification in the *Fêtes Galantes* of Watteau and his school, before ever the guillotine had loomed forth as the ghastly symbol of an enraged Nemesis. Those fascinating canvases portray an elysian paradise, where the drawing-room exquisites of the period—artificial flowers of humanity—are grouped in the open air, with

* "There must be work done by the arms, or none of us would live; and work done by the brains, or the life would not be worth the having. And the same man cannot do both."—John Ruskin.

a highly artificial Nature for background, and all the sterner facts of life banished far out of remembrance. To Millet, the man of the soil, these figures of Watteau, and their originals, were so many "little stage-men condemned to laugh—marionettes that would be shut up in a box after the play, to weep over their fate." In a complete rebound from the current ideals of decorative prettiness, he painted rude sowers and reapers, haymakers and gleaners, shepherds and woodcutters, with complete truthfulness, and at the same time with profound significance. And one of his pictures, *L'Angelus*, has become a cherished possession of the whole civilised world.

In that famous picture, however, the charm lies not so much in a portrayal of dignified labour under humble conditions, as in its suggestion of lowly response to the Infinite. Humanity, as represented there, has become the exponent, not only of Nature's activities, but chiefly of the soul of aspiration which, to the reverent eye, seems to possess her, especially at dawn and in the solemn evening twilight.* And the question comes unbidden: "How far are those two figures with

* To this "soul of aspiration" Gladstone would give the name of "worship." He says: "Nature is instinct and vocal with worship, and Creation in its humblest orders, giving a lesson to its loftiest, ministers to the glory of the Most High" (*Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*).

bowed heads, in the *Angelus* picture, typical of the generality, in the various lands of Christendom? What proportion of these toilers have caught any tone of the eternal melodies, and are tuning their lives to harmonies divine?"

In asking such a question, we are assuming that, corresponding to the invisible part of the environment of trees and herbs—the atmosphere from whence they derive substance and strength—there is for human life an adequate spiritual environment, from whence the sons of men may, in like manner, draw substance and strength for their moral and spiritual nature. And that, as vegetation yields a full response to its unseen physical environment, so it is normal for us all to yield a full response to our unseen spiritual environment. All analogy would suggest that this is the case, and the highest teaching of the centuries, endorsed by the most enlightened experiences of many generations, affirms it to be even so. And thus it follows that, when no such response is yielded, there is a vacancy that needs to be filled, and an abnormal contrast with Nature that needs to be corrected.

The contrasts between Nature and humanity are broadened and intensified when we change our point of observation from that of a homestead in our Christian lands, to that of a hill-top * from

* See Preface.

which a populous town in a non-Christian land may be seen afar.

We need not blacken human nature, in any land whatever, by calling it altogether "vile" amid "pleasing prospects." That were an antithesis too lacking in half-tones. But in the hearts of the most law-abiding townsmen yonder there is a conviction, never entirely absent, of something wrong within, however much they may pride themselves on being better than the generality.

Their haunting sense of moral failure is hardly the Scriptural conviction of sin against God, for the Supreme is an unfocussed quantity to their imaginations. And, for the same reason, however accusative their conscience may become at times, there seems to be no prayer offered for moral rightness. To whom should such a prayer be offered? Not to the gods represented by idols, for the only offence that could be committed against them would be neglect of *non-moral* worship or propitiation. Certainly there is prayer offered to them for the aversion of evil in the bare sense of calamity. But they have never been regarded as prayer-hearing rectifiers of moral character. Their own characters indeed (except in such cases as Buddha,*

* According to the Burmese biography of Gautama, his death was caused by a too free indulgence in a dish of pork. But only from the strictest Buddhist point of view would such a lapse from his vegetarian principles be regarded as a moral failure.

Kuanyin, and several deified worthies of old) would often fail to pass any ordinary moral tests. And they are, all of them, obviously unqualified for an authoritative lordship over the conscience.

Yet still, with a latent or more poignant conviction of moral evil, there is a vague and indefinite feeling that *some one* in the unseen must know of it, and regard it with displeasure ; which *some one*, also quite vague and indefinite, is perhaps connoted by the word *Heaven*. "So," it is felt, "we must try to do better in the future—if we can." For so much of conscience has been allotted to every child of man, unless he succeeds in clogging its activities, and so much of a religious instinct is found everywhere in humanity, unless withered by soulless materialism, that it has been next to impossible to imagine the unseen as uninhabited vacuity, devoid of perception and intelligence.

On the hill-top Nature is transfigured around us at dawn ; but in those human lives yonder is a woeful lack of transfiguration—beyond that of a mother's love for her babe, and a distinctly "good deed" here and there in neighbourly intercourse. "Vileness" among the better-class townsmen there may not be, but there is much squalor of thought and motive, when those lives are truly read. And among the worse class (which may not

be always the poorer class), against whose wrong-doing the rest are laboriously trying to protect themselves, there is a lower nature in evidence, passion-tost and vile indeed. Transfigured Nature on the mountain, but in the human nature at its base there would seem to lurk alien powers in possession—which must be cast out by the power of the Highest, if that human nature is to be brought into harmony with its truer environment.

Who or what that Highest may be, and how men are to get into harmony with Him or with it, is the double question which the religious instinct of man has ever asked—languidly or earnestly; languidly, if there has been little arousal of conscience; earnestly, when aroused to some standard from which sin is seen to be low and lowering, even when accompanied by seeming advantage. And until that double question has been answered in some intelligent fashion, and that answer has become a personal deterrent, there has been a notable tendency to degenerate toward the lowest of which man's nature is capable; into depths, indeed, which no missionary has dared to pollute his lips, or his countrymen's ears, by describing; no missionary save one, named Paul, and he only in terse generalities in which the hideous details are suppressed.

Truly, man's lowest has been manifest on earth,

in repulsive conditions that may be hinted at in the terms of physical disease once employed by a Hebrew writer, as a mass of "wounds and bruises and putrefying sores"; a ghastly caricature of manhood, compared with which a rotting herb were a sweet and wholesome thing. And one of the puzzles in the history of intellectual analysis is how it came to be possible for an advanced school of philosophy, at the beginning of this century, to have diagnosed all moral evil as a comparatively harmless accidental in the process of higher evolution. The analogy possessing the mind, in this strange phase of thought, must surely have been that of sourness in the fruit being a preliminary stage toward ultimate sweetness. The truer analogy would be that of the burrowing worms in the tree-trunk,* which, if unchecked, effectually prevent any fruitage whatever.

As the axiom that disease is inimical to health must lie at the basis of all hygienics, so the eternal antagonism of right and wrong must become axiomatic before we can begin to arrive at any sane philosophy of human evolution. The more

* This is indeed the Chinese view of the case: "When the cassia tree has worms in its heart, the worms despoil it; when the worms mature (even) the (much-prized) cassia tree snaps and falls"; the oft-quoted words of Yen Yen-chih (384—456 A.D.), a moralist of the calibre of Sir Richard Steele of the *Spectator*, and the character of Dick Steele of Thackeray's *Esmond*. He had studied moral evil at close quarters.

ignorant among Chinese peasantry may hold and affirm that small-pox is a normal incident in a child's development, but it is next to impossible for any man, unversed in metaphysical casuistry, to hold for a moment that treachery has ever been incipient fidelity, that burglary has ever been incipient honesty, that adultery may be a stage on the road to chastity, or that ferocity and malice can ever be side-posts of the gate of brotherly love.

It is to be admitted that wrong-doing, when revealed in all its inherent hideousness, may so shock the conscience of the onlooker as to become to him, in a secondary sense, a deterrent from similar evil; even as the ravages of small-pox in a Chinese hamlet may alarm neighbouring villages into crude measures for its delimitation. The grosser iniquities of depraved parents may shock their children into comparative rectitude. But ever it has been the arousal of conscience to the evil of wrong-dong, and the awakening of a dynamic instinct of escape therefrom, that have determined the moral evolution of the race.

Our science must ever remain true enough to patent facts of history to include in its cognisance the phenomenon of moral devolution; to recognise the low and lowering nature of all wrong-doing, the degradation of all "servitude to sin" (see

John viii. 34), in the individual and in the race at large. And our religion can only claim to be truly scientific when it owns that the wickedness of men has often been of such transcendent vileness as to call for some recognition of evil powers of tyrannous seduction, investing the character of wicked men—a belief that is common to every religion on earth, however divergent men's insight into the nature of the morally Highest.

Who or what is that Highest ?

Were we to press the " scholars and populace " of a Far Eastern fourth of the race for an answer to this question, that answer would be given under the several terms : " The Sovereign Supreme " (Shang Ti), " Heaven " (T'ien), or " Tao " (literally The Way, but used in the sense of The Great Norma), for these are the terms which have come down from the Sages of antiquity. The sacred kings of China's golden age worshipped " The Sovereign Supreme " ; Confucius proclaims the moral oversight of " Heaven " ; Lao Tzŭ discoursed on " The Tao." And these terms, and what they stand for, are well worth our study to-day.

1. Under the first term, we find in the Book of Odes * the words : " Great is the Sovereign Supreme ! Down-bending in majesty ; Surveying

* A Classic, with portions dating back about 1000 B.C., compiled and edited by Confucius about 500 B.C.

all regions ; Seeking the repose of the populace " ; —words which call to our mind a passage in Jeremiah (xxix. 11) : " I know the thoughts that I think toward you (as a nation), saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you hope. . . ." This is a fragment belonging to the very ancient patriarchal religion of China (to be noticed in the next chapter).

2. The hieroglyph for the second term (T'ien) is made up of the signs for *one* and *great*, and is analysed in the ancient dictionary of China (published 100 A.D.) as " The *One* that is *great*, exalted in the highest " ; and defined, a century earlier, by a worthy follower of Confucius (Yang Hsiung, 53 B.C.—18 A.D.) in the words : " Heaven is spiritual, Heaven is intelligent, with a luminous knowledge of all regions. Heaven is germinal, Heaven is of multiform potency, and all things do homage thereto."

3. Concerning the third term (Tao, the Great Norma) the ancient dictionary quotes from a yet more ancient authority, whose name is lost to us : " Alone in primæval infinity was the Tao, established as One ; creating and dividing-out heaven and earth, evolving and maturing all things " ;— words strangely harmonising with verses 1a and 3 of St. John's Gospel, where, in all Chinese versions, the term used for *Logos* is *Tao*. And thus a frag-

ment from an early author whose work we can ill afford to lose.

Instead of this lost treatise we have the writings of the earliest known philosopher of East Asia, Li (surname) Erh (personal name),* commonly called Lao Tzŭ (Venerable Philosopher), who was born 604 B.C., and left behind him a small collection of aphorisms, beginning with the fine couplet: "The way (*tao*) that may be tracked is not the eternal Tao; the name that can be named is not the eternal Name."

Lao Tzŭ held the office of Custodian of the Archives at the Imperial Court of his day, but eventually withdrew from that post, and became a recluse. This he did, in the words of his chief modern exponent,† because "he saw how corrupt society had become, rendering all real spirituality impossible. And rather than become tainted by what he felt unable to change, he put aside earthly ambition, and retired from the world." When he reached the frontier, however, as a notable historian (Ssŭ-ma Ch'ien, cir. 163—85 B.C.) tells us, he lingered awhile under the hospitable roof of a certain Customs official, who brought him to put in writing

* On the lines of the Latinised term Confucius, for K'ung Fu-tzŭ, the philosopher K'ung, he might be called in English Lifucius, for Li Fu-tzŭ, the philosopher Li.

† C. Spurgeon Medhurst, *The Tao Teh King* (Chicago: Theosophical Book Concern, 1905).

his views on the universe. Hence his booklet, the Tao Teh King, or "Classic of Tao-efficacy."

His aphorisms are, most of them, couched in terms of cryptographic obscurity, partly by reason of his excessive economy of words, and partly from the mystic depth of his philosophising. Among his simpler utterances are the following:

> High souls hear Truth and hail it with delight;
> The medium sort now rev'rence it, now slight;
> While the vain laugh of self-sufficient youth
> Proves it in very deed to be the Truth.
>
> (XLI., unrhymed in the original.)

The supreme Norma is a vast plain, yet the generality prefer by-paths (LIII.). Men who are great live in touch with the substantial, they do not abide among superficialities; they find their resting place in *reality*, and not in things that are showy (XXXVIII.).

Who knows contentment courts no shame; who knows where to stop incurs no danger. Such long endure (XLIV.). Humility is the basis of honour; lowliness the foundation of loftiness (XXXIX.). A great country is a lowly country (LXI.).

Soldiers are instruments of ill-omen, they are not tools for a deep thinker. Only when it is inevitable will he employ them (XXXI.).

I would return good for good; I would return good for evil, for thus is goodness effectual (XLIX.).

One of his aphorisms commends a non-moral indifference to evil, and thus we may expect his conception of the Highest to be a somewhat non-moral one. He says: "Yes and yea,—are they not alike? Goodness and evil—are they not akin?" The thought in his mind may perhaps be that there is a great deal to be said on both

sides, in a matter of disagreement, and no absolute right or wrong in the case of either party to a quarrel.

His more obvious teaching is that thought is more powerful than speech, meditation more potent than action, and lowliness a surer path to life's goal than strife and competition. The qualities he prizes are tranquillity and self-effacement; the influence he admires is the unconscious power of goodness. The quiet virtues and their results he regards as characteristic of his main doctrine—conformity to the Tao. He uses the word Tao, sometimes for Truth, sometimes for the supreme Norma, but generally in a sense all his own—as an algebraical *x* for an infinite potency. He never defines it. But, as we seem to need an English translation for it, we may employ the word *Nature-Force*, a term which covers its chief requirements. And the clue to his reasoning is found in the fact that *he applies the philosophy of vegetable life to human character.*

The contrasts which we have been noting between vegetable nature and human nature seem to have urged on the arousal of his philosophical faculties. He was particularly impressed by the quiescence of vegetation and the fussiness of mankind; the placid harmony of Nature and the brawling strife between rival dukedoms and clans, in an exceed-

ingly lawless age. He saw that, in the valleys among the hills (for he preferred valleys, typical of lowliness, to heights that are suggestive of aspiration), the trees and herbs live and grow in effortless response to Nature-Force, and argued that if men were but content to be quiescent to this same Force, their lives would also become normal and good and harmonious. In practice, his system amounts to *the quiet absorption of Nature-Force.*

To give his system a fair trial, it has always been considered necessary to retire from the world as Lao Tzŭ himself did. And perhaps the nearest approach to a modern Lifucian (if the word may be used) is found in the author of *Walden.* The American poet-naturalist Thoreau, whose motto "the simple life" * has come into such wide currency, lived by choice alone in the woods for some years, in a hut he built for himself, supporting himself from the soil around. He writes: "This is a delicious evening, when the whole body is one sense. . . . I go and come with a strange liberty in Nature, as part of herself. Sympathy with the fluttering cotton-wood and poplar almost takes away my breath; yet, like the lake, my serenity is rippled not ruffled. . . . Every morning

* Apparently adopted from Crabbe (*The Village*, 1783):
"I sought the simple life that Nature yields."

is a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and, may I say, innocence,* with Nature herself."

In one of Robert Louis Stevenson's early essays, also, "An Apology for Idlers," he gives playful expression to much of the Lifucian philosophy; arguing with delightful artlessness that "Extreme *busyness* is a symptom of deficient vitality; and a faculty for idleness implies a catholic appetite and a strong sense of personal identity." He says: "The truant may pitch on some tuft of lilacs over a burn, and smoke innumerable pipes to the tune of the water on the stones. A bird will sing to him in the thicket. And there he may fall into a vein of kindly thought, and see things in a new perspective. . . . We may conceive Mr. Worldly Wiseman accosting such an one. 'How now, young fellow, what dost thou here?' 'Truly, sir, I take mine ease.' 'Is not this the hour of the class? and shouldst thou not be plying thy book with diligence, to the end thou mayst obtain knowledge?' 'Nay, but thus I follow after learning, by your leave.' 'Learning, quotha! After

* The use of this word by Thoreau is paralleled in a couplet in a poem by William Cullen Bryant, where, addressing a "rural maid," he says:

"The forest depths, by foot unpressed,
Are not more sinless than thy breast."

This is surely the extreme gospel of Nature!

what fashion, I pray thee ? ' ' Indeed, sir, I lie here, by the water, to learn by root-of-heart a lesson which my master teaches me to call peace, or contentment.' "

Certainly our modern city and suburban life, with its rush of competing engrossment, or its round of social engagement, may be in many cases quite as complex, though not as corrupt, as that of the Oriental court from which Lao Tzŭ escaped, to enjoy the placidity of rural valleys. And few modern townsmen but have had awakened within them, by the noise and bustle around,

> The universal instinct of repose,
> The longing for confirmed tranquillity,
> Inward and outward, humble, yet sublime,*

which seems likely to be found in some retreat amid the quietude of the country. Yet, to revert to our main topic, it is manifestly possible to live the simplest life, in closest contact with Nature, as the world's millions of agricultural labourers do, and to gain little or no moral uplifting therefrom. For rural districts have often produced quite as many problems for the moral and spiritual reformer as those which are thrust upon him in towns and cities.

What men gain from Nature depends largely

* Wordsworth, *Excursion*, Book III.

on what personal qualities they take with them into Nature. Ruskin in his younger days of lover-like fondness for rural scenes, and with Christian sentiment well developed within him, would seem to have gained much. The spell which Nature cast upon him was, he says, "according to its strength, inconsistent with every evil feeling, with spite, anger, covetousness, discontent, and every other hateful passion." * But human nature would be too strong in less cultured and religious minds for these results to be secured as real gains to the character. And Lao Tzŭ's system was meant for good-natured recluses, of mid-age and onwards, whose passions were mostly spent. He never intended it to reform society, or to uplift the generality of mankind.

Yet his philosophy is of great historical interest. For his embryonic idea, arising in other minds also, has been variously developed through the centuries, first in Oriental systems of escape from human passions and earthly relations, and next (probably under Oriental influence originally) in Western ideals of the cloister, although these latter have been lit by more gracious objects of con-

* He adds, in the same breath: "Though it had much power in moulding the character, it had hardly any in strengthening it; it formed temperament, but never instilled principle; it kept me generally good-humoured and kindly, but could not teach me perseverance or self-denial."

templation than impersonal Nature-Force, or all-comprising Brahma, or a Nirvana-sleeping Buddha.

Given a normalising Force within the heart of humanity, Lao Tzŭ argues, men will grow placid and self-less. And herein he is seconded by the various systems of severance from worldly affairs. In its outworking his own system would develop man's relatedness to Nature *at the expense of* his relatedness to humanity. These later systems have striven to develop man's relatedness to the spiritual at the expense of his relatedness to the material, or else his relatedness to a future life at the expense of his relatedness to the present life. And truly there have appeared, from time to time, in hilly retreats those who have been regarded as living in touch with the infinite, and in the cells of the cloister those who have been fired with a magnificent passion of other-worldliness.

Yet if, as we have seen, the normalising Force in vegetation causes it to respond to the whole of its rightful environment, and to the whole scheme for its usefulness, out in the open, amid stress of all weathers, we have to remember also that, after all, man's most obvious environment lies in the work-a-day world of action, with all its stress and strain; and his most obvious duties (duties he dare not shirk) are those toward his fellow men;

whatever important relations may exist between him and the unseen. And thus, none of these systems of escape from the common human sphere furnishes a solution of the great human problem, or yields any real answer to the challenge which the trees and herbs and flowers so quietly, yet forcibly, proclaim to us.

On the way toward any true philosophy of a normalising Force for humanity, we have need to study man's proper relations to man in this material world, as well as his relatedness to the transcendental and spiritual. And herein lies the usefulness of another Chinese philosopher, more notable than Lao Tzŭ, who supplies much solid material for thought upon the former of these considerations.

Fifty years the junior of Lao Tzŭ, there arose K'ung Ch'iu, called in Chinese K'ung (Fu) Tzŭ, and known to us as Confucius, who first won notoriety in his day as an upright magistrate, when official probity was rare indeed. From this local magistracy he rose to adorn the office of Lord Chief Justice in his native State. Under his wise counsel and splendid influence this State of Lu became so prosperous that the ruler of a neighbouring dukedom, being roused to jealousy and some measure of alarm (for strength in those days meant power of aggression), contrived to pervert the

Marquis of Lu from his firm rulership, by a gift of some beautiful singing girls and a stud of fine horses. The ruse succeeded. All matters of state were neglected for orgies of dissipation, and Confucius, protesting in vain, retired from office. But not, like Lao Tzŭ, from the world. He became a wandering counsellor to such as would listen to him.

The incident which awoke the philosopher within him, then, was a glaring neglect of rulership on the part of a ruler.

Now it happened that in the ancient notes on an archaic cabbalistic treatise (*The Book of Changes*) which fascinated Confucius, there occurred the words: "Father father, son son, elder-brother elder-brother, younger-brother younger-brother, husband husband, wife wife, then the household rectified; rectified households, then the whole realm established." The philosophy of these words was adopted by Confucius, as in his saying: "True government is found where the prince is prince, and the statesman is statesman, where the father is father and the son is son" (*Analects*, XII. xi. 2), and in his proclamation of the Five Relations, between "prince and statesman, father and son, elder and younger brother, husband and wife, friend and companion" (*The Mean*, XX. 8), which are quoted everywhere, as the core of the Confucian

system,* by learned and unlearned alike, throughout China to-day.

Confucius was an unimaginative man, with no "glimpse of incomprehensibles, or thoughts of things which thoughts but tenderly touch" (as Sir Thomas Browne would put it). He was averse to all mystical speculations, and recommended a "respectful aloofness" from any ghostly beings which the unseen might contain.† But, with the common sense which an age of disorder so much needed, he proclaimed, as his life-message, *the fulfilment of human relations in the sight of high Heaven.*

Of the manifold human relations he deemed the filial relation of highest importance, and so emphasised it above all others—the literal relation of children to parents, and the metaphorically filial relation of the masses to the powers that be (in a realm where the relation of ruler to ruled was of the ancient patriarchal order). Nor was he blind to the duties of rulers toward the populace. A considerable portion of his sayings, and of those of his successor Meng Tzŭ (Mencius), may be summed up under the phrase, *Maxims for Mandarins.*

* Steele was unconsciously Confucian when he defined "the worthier part of mankind" as "good fathers, generous brothers, sincere friends, and faithful subjects" (*Spectator*, No. 49).

† "Respect the spirits—but keep aloof from them" (*Analects*, VI. xx.); for his generation had a decided fondness for superstition and spiritualism.

These were unheeded by the officials of that age, but were cherished by a band of ardent young disciples, and recorded for the benefit of after-generations, to form the standard text-book for all aspirants toward mandarinship.

He had no directions to give in the philosophy and practice of worship, but only directions to his student-disciples (officials *in posse*) in the science and art of making themselves worshipful. As Ruskin says of Shakespeare: * "Instead of the perpetual sense of the helpful presence of the Deity, which through all ancient traditions is the source of heroic strength . . . we find only the consciousness of moral law . . . and of the resolved arbitration of the destinies, that conclude into precision of doom what we freely and blindly begin." By the time of Confucius, the imperial monopoly of adoration of the Sovereign Supreme had precluded the use of that Divine term itself among the generality, and so he uses the less definite term "Heaven" for the Disposer of human destiny, and the Lord of the conscience; laying no emphasis on the cultivation of direct relations to the Supreme, other than through the fulfilment of all earthly duty. And so his system contains little or no provision for the spiritual side of human nature.

* Lecture on "The Mystery of Life and its Arts," delivered in Dublin, 1868.

Yet his enforcement of the family bond, and his fixing upon the fulfilment of human relations as the basis of virtue, give to much of his teaching the element of timelessness.

He emphasised the filial relation. And a modern divine * might be consciously paraphrasing some of Confucius' utterances in the words: "The stability and permanence of the nation depend on the reverence of children for their parents. The discipline of the family is intimately related to the order, the security, and the greatness of the State. Bad children make bad citizens. If there be a want of reverence for parental authority, there will be want of reverence for public authority. If there be disorder in the home, there will be disorder in the national life."

His specific view of the basis of virtue may seem quite obvious to us, when once pointed out. But we must remember that Gautama's path of virtue, in his pessimism concerning ordinary life,† was that of mendicant celibacy, which would first deny and then destroy all normal human relations, within the region of its full adoption; and the

* R. W. Dale, on Ephesians vi. 1–3.

† A *Times* article on Tolstoi (Nov. 1910) says: "European disgust of this life is apt to be the disgust of failure or excess, but in all Eastern religions [rather, most mid-Asian religions.—W. A. C.] there is an instinct that revolts from this life even at its fairest."

equally pessimistic mediæval ideal * of "the religious life" was that of life-long incarceration, tending to produce, in the severe language of Milton, "a fugitive and cloistered virtue, that never sallied forth, but slunk out of the race, where the immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat." † We must also remember that, as late as the days of Bentham ‡ and Mill, our countrymen had failed to arrive at any ultimate analysis of virtue, but quoted "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" or "utilitarianism" as the final basis of morals; and that some of our later writers have assumed or affirmed that the mere convenience of society determines the right or wrong of any course of action.

In contradistinction from all this, Confucius stands forth as the early apostle of duty, and the prophet of irrefrangible rightness, when he urges

* Father Cody, O.S.B., says (*Nineteenth Century*, Oct. 1884): "Monasteries uphold to men the spectacle of an ideal Christian life carried into practice."

† *Areopagitica.*

‡ Bentham goes as far as to say: "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do as well as to determine what we shall do. The standard of right and wrong is fastened to their throne." He adds that the value of pleasure is determined by (1) its intensity, (2) duration, (3) certainty, (4) propinquity, (5) fecundity, (6) purity, *i.e.* freedom from after pain, and (7) the number of persons who will share it (*Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Chaps. I. and IV.).

that, attested by every unwarped conscience, there are Heaven-fixed relations 'twixt man and man, beginning at the filial relation, and extending to all affairs everywhere—relations which no good man will neglect, but which every man is required to fulfil, as his personal contribution toward putting the world right. And this message undoubtedly stands good for the present century, no less than for the centuries of antiquity. Indeed, this teaching of Confucius is so ultimate that it fits in perfectly with the highest teaching of West Asia, where the revelation of God as our Heavenly Father makes filial devotion to God the crown and completion of man's whole duty to man upon earth.

A great boon to humanity it is to gain a clear reliable topography of the ways of righteousness; for our conscience, no less than our disposition, may be subject to strange twists. And here before us is a simple philosophy of life, requiring no metaphysical culture in the learner. Here is the plain path of virtue for all generations; will human nature arise and walk in it?

Its earliest exponent seems to have expected as much—at first. He had not then anticipated an apothegm of Archbishop Whately: "It is folly to expect men to do all that they may reasonably be expected to do." His utterances have been

recorded with no chronological arrangement, but we imagine it was the comparatively inexperienced reformer who exclaimed: "If a man will only desire to live the life of goodness—there and then his life becomes good" (*Analects*, VII. 29); and "If a man were really to set himself for a single day to live the life of goodness, I do not believe he would find himself devoid of the strength to do so. At least I have never heard of such a case" (IV. 16).

On the former of these statements a notable commentator, Chü Hsi (1130—1200 A.D.), in his lectures to students, says: "For every man there are but two motives—Heavenly principle and human passion.* And these are like two irreconcilable adversaries of old [whose names are given]. If the one advances, the other retreats. There can be no neutrality between them, or any cessation of victory or defeat." And for human passion to be so far overcome by Heavenly principle that the man ardently wishes to live aright, is certainly the first step toward actual goodness. But the mere wish to be good seems, on the whole, inadequate for the great enterprise. There is a dynamic antagonism to Heavenly principle, inherent in the passions, according to Chü Hsi; or at least some forces of inertia entrenched within

* The Chinese word is *desire*, but is commonly used in literature in the sense of *selfish craving*, or *passion*.

and around the man, according to three other witnesses. "It is not that I do not delight in your teaching, but my strength is inadequate," said Yen Chiu, a disciple of Confucius. "I see and approve the better, and yet I follow the worse," says one of Ovid's characters. "The good which I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do," says Paul retrospectively.* Much of the earlier life of Augustine also, as described by himself, is a practical commentary upon this triple confession. And not alone that of Augustine, surely. For, quite apart from any theological view of the case, have not these unwilling admissions been echoed in all ages by the human conscience, as it finds itself hampered by adverse forces, that block the path of goodness? And if these forces be more than the dream of a morbid imagination, if they be of a veritably dynamic order, they will hardly be overcome by a finer perception of Heavenly principle, or even a sincere acquiescence in any exalted religious creed. The

* A quaint anecdote, significant of much, is related in the old Chinese chronicles: In the year 670 B.C. "Duke Huan, of the State of Ch'i, went to Kuo (a little State that had recently been annihilated), and asked an old man of those parts why that State had ceased to be. The reply was: 'Because our ruler loved the good and hated the evil.' 'According to your words,' said the Duke, 'he must have been a worthy prince. How then came he to ruin?' Quoth the old man: 'He loved the good, but was unable to secure it; he hated the evil, but was unable to get rid of it. Thus the State perished.'"

case surely demands the inflow of higher dynamic forces—if such higher forces are to be obtained by any means from anywhere.

As early as the days of Confucius men had learned to employ the winds to propel their boats up broad rivers against adverse currents, and later on they learned to navigate the high seas in a manner quite impossible to all ancient methods of manual propulsion, until, at the present day, most dynamic problems in physical regions have been solved by a wide grip of various Nature-forces, supplying human incompetencies. Are there, in like manner, any moral forces, obtainable from the unseen, that may serve to make our human nature more than a match for the adverse forces of unrighteousness, against which it seems at times so helpless ?

With regard to himself, Confucius once said: "Heaven produced what is good in me" (*Analects*, VII. xxii.). And the task of a true man, living in full touch with earthly affairs, was, to his mind, that of conserving and developing this initial supply of moral energy—received once for all. He did not dream of daily accretions of moral strength, by any ardent "laying hold upon" a supreme Energy Divine, corresponding to Lao Tzŭ's passive reception of non-moral Nature-force.

Yet, however much the world has progressed

since his day in all other matters of practical dynamics, the human problem remains exactly as it did in those early ages, and its real solution must be looked for on such lines as these. For what is needed for human nature is something answering to that possessed by vegetation—a great normalising energy, working gently from within, which shall supply an adequate impetus of response to the whole of our rightful relations with things seen and unseen, in lives and characters that become graceful as the flowers, and useful as the corn, and stalwart as the storm-withstanding pine.

AUTHORITY AND POWER SUPREME

"A due recognition of Heaven is indispensable to any attempted knowledge of men."—CONFUCIUS, *The Mean*, XX. 7.

II

AUTHORITY AND POWER SUPREME

Most of the enlightened of all ages have had either a suspicion or an assurance that all moral questions, in human life and character, are at their basis religious ones. Not indeed to be solved by the mere possession of this creed or that, but still somehow connected with the question already cited: "Who or what is the Highest, and how can men get into harmony with Him or with it?"

This question, we said, has been asked by men of all ages and climes—languidly or earnestly according to the lesser or greater arousal of conscience to that which is low and lowering, within and around them. And when the question has been asked in full earnestness, it is hard to imagine that no gleams of light have broken through the gloom, into the innermost convictions of the man, whatever the crudeness of the religion in which he may have been nurtured.

For, as every man of moral discernment must

see himself to be connected with men and affairs by various relations, and *conscience* may be roughly defined as a recognition of the duties which spring from those relations, so every man possessed of religious instincts must feel himself to be related, in some fashion or other, to the unseen, and a *religious conscience* may be roughly defined as a recognition of the duties which spring from that relatedness. And hardly ever has there been quite absent from the religious conscience of man the conviction that, above all men and all things to which he should rightly look up with respect and admiration, there is in the unseen a Power requiring from him still greater respect and admiration; or, in other words, that above and beyond all men and things worshipful (calling forth a recognition of exalted worthiness) there is somewhere a supreme Object of Worship. He may have subdivided that Power into powers, and tried to employ those powers as mere ministering servants to his desires and passions, but in so far as he has done this, he has lost his distinctively religious conscience, which, wherever it exists, points upward toward some kind of Centre for all dutiful impulse.

He may not have defined that central Object of Worship. But, in order to satisfy his religious consciousness, there should be somewhere in the

high invisibilities a mind that is quite righteous and benevolent; for on earth there are men who do right things and kindly ones, and the supreme Centre of all must not be inferior to them, as regards a just and kindly disposition. Then, as he himself is evidently not the owner and controller of the universe, and as his conscience dictates to him with an air of authority, he may gather that in the Centre of all there is supreme moral authority. Further, when oppressed by a sense of moral helplessness, he will at any rate hope that in the Centre of all there is also to be found some sort of moral helpfulness.

Thus, should his mind be sufficiently clear, he will argue (or perhaps he will feel without conscious arguing) that in the unseen there are Authority to demand his obedience, Righteousness to make that demand appeal to his conscience, Benevolence to make that demand appeal to his affections, and also some Power to assist him to meet that demand. These four great qualities, comprised in the twin attributes of *Moral Authority* and *Moral Power to help*, are necessary in order to give him an adequate Centre for his worshipping capacities.

Should the man have been a subject of a wide empire, such as that of ancient Rome, or of China (before its recent upheaval), or of any considerable monarchy whatever, he will probably have added

one more attribute to the Supreme—inaccessibility, comparable to that of the monarch of his land. Such has been the case among most Chinese from of old. And it is said that, after the Roman occupation of Crete, when the supreme Zeus had become supreme Jupiter, his images were made without ears, to signify that (like the Roman emperor himself) he was not at liberty to attend to ordinary matters in the little life of a subject populace. With a Supreme Deity relegated to an inaccessible distance from his daily affairs, the man will naturally have formed for himself lesser objects of worship, endowed with such qualities as justice, goodness, and power to help him—in his temporal concerns. But *he will not have endowed these demi-gods of his with either of the two primal attributes of the Most High—Moral Authority and Moral Power to help him.* For there is a deep principle hidden in some words recorded in West Asia, purporting to be an utterance of God Himself: "I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise unto graven images" (Isaiah xlii. 8).

Glory and praise of a sort have been given to various gods and goddesses represented by graven images. The cry: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" has reverberated, with a change of name, throughout the centuries, at many an idol

festival; but the precise qualities of *Moral* Authority and *Moral* Power to help, seem never in history to have been attributes of any lesser than the Supreme.*

In China, from the year 221 B.C., on the accession to the throne of a self-styled Inaugurator, Shih Huang ("First Emperor" of a new era), who temporarily abolished the imperial worship of the Sovereign Supreme in favour of "eight lords" of his own invention, there arose a popular religion, borrowing the word Tao from Lao Tzŭ, and gradually providing a pantheon of demi-gods. These were deified Chinese worthies of old, and were popularly considered as statesmen of the unapproachable Supreme. Thus, at its best, Chinese Taoism was a religion of hero-worship, and so falls into line with the earlier religions of North Europe. The worship offered to these heroes, in both East and West, was entirely for the obtaining of temporal aid—from those who once had worthily assisted their tribe or nation. To none of these divinities were relegated the attributes of Moral Authority and Moral Power to help. And in China, on the degradation of the Supreme into the ghost of a court magician, by the exceedingly

* The one apparent exception has been the case of a sect of Higher Buddhism in Japan, not unmoulded by West Asian influences, where the name Ju Lai (one of the less-used names of Buddha) is used for the Supreme Himself.

weak emperor Hui Tsung (1101—1125 A.D.), the religion of popular Taoism rapidly degenerated.

Here is a specimen instance of the general principle that *the worship of personalities or entities short of the Supreme*, being devoid of a cognisance of Moral Authority, and of Moral Power to help the worshipper, *must be in itself devoid of all moral stamina*, and can hardly, in any generation, preserve itself from deterioration into meaningless superstition. A notable fact this, for all students of the incipient science of Comparative Religion.

In the religious history of the race, we are also confronted by a wider consideration : the deterioration of that which was once quite admirable, if primitive and rudimentary ; where indeed a good start gave some promise of much after-progress in the right direction.

The doctrine of Evolution, in its broad issues, supposes in every genus and species, of any normal order, an inherent tendency to improvement in the long run. And it would be a comfortable thing to apply such a doctrine to the genus *homo*, in regard to the distinctive faculty of spiritual consciousness, even under the qualifying simile of the rising tide, with allowances for periodical set-backs in a general record of real progress. Especially as the doctrine of Evolution does apply

in the main to the history of civilisation itself, as regards considerable sections of the human family.

Not only have races emerged from barbarism into culture, but each succeeding wave of culture has been farther-reaching than the previous one. The stage of culture revealed in the Code of Hammurabi (cir. 2500 B.C.), and its contemporary tablet-records of social life, would seem to have been a decided advance on that of the Turanian Chaldeans, prior to the fall of Akkad, 3800 B.C. Greek culture in its palmy days was a manifest development, compared with that of early Babylon. And the culture inaugurated by the Renaissance has proved in the end to have been yet more admirable and eclective than that of ancient Greece or Rome. This principle of development is reflected in the history of art, from the earliest dawn of the art-faculty. Egyptian art portrayed a considerable range of life. It was the art of children proud to be able to draw anything they saw, but always crudely, with only a conventional rendering, and no idealisation. Assyrian art strove to idealise but one side of life, the fiercer prowess of the regal conqueror. Grecian art chose a much nobler range of subjects, and if it idealised form rather than living character, it brought the human form to a pitch of excellence which appealed to its contemporaries as fully god-like. Ancient classical

art, at its best, "corporealised the spiritual"; modern art at its highest "spiritualises the corporeal." * With all its excellence, classical art "missed altogether any adequate conception of that other life, the life of Nature, where beauty is without sensuality, and passion without sin." Nor does it give us a hint of human nature as touched by the infinite beauty and passion of Divine Love—human nature in which purity and passion are blended in a soul of worship. But modern art, while it includes the sacred elements, portrays to us life in general, life in its widest range, lit with glowing character, in which Nature and the human world are seen at their fairest and best. In a word, the modern school not only includes many of the excellences of its predecessors, but "bids fair to show that the theme of Art is as limitless as is the splendour of the creation." †

Yet, while the progress of culture may serve to exemplify the doctrine of Evolution, we find that in "the long run" of spiritual consciousness, as lit up by the history of four thousand years, we have presented to us, among many important races, the melancholy spectacle of the coarsening of all higher sensibility, and the letting slip of sacred verities once firmly grasped; and only as regards

* Borne.

† Wyke Bayliss, *The Enchanted Island* (concluding summary).

one tribe in West Asia, and those races which became its pupils, do we find, through and above the crash of generations and centuries falling into the abyss, a history of intermittent progress, from strength to strength, from vague confusion towards a definite harmony and completeness.

Plutarch may have had little irrefrangible evidence for some of his chronicles of earliest Rome, but he is at least recording venerable tradition when he depicts the religion of those days as of a fairly pure, if rudimentary order. History proper is a record of what has been; tradition embodies what men imagined to have been; and if with a glorification of what actually happened, then a glorification upon the lines of what men would wish to have been the case, or of what men deemed to be right and fitting, under the conditions described. Thus Plutarch tells us that "Numa forbade the Romans to represent the Deity in the form either of man or beast. Nor was there among them any image or statue of the Divine Being. During the first hundred and seventy years they built temples indeed, but placed in them no figure of any kind, being persuaded that it was impious to represent things divine by what is perishable, and that we can have no conception of God but by the understanding."

From that simple condition of religious faith

there was soon a rapid devolution in doctrine and practice, until, from the testimony of Roman writers themselves, we are forced to accept St. Paul's lurid picture of Roman religion and morals as anything but an exaggeration. As Goldsmith puts it in one of his essays,* "every vice incident to human nature was celebrated in the worship of one or other of their divinities, and every infirmity consecrated by public feast and solemn sacrifice." Here, then, we have a disgraceful falling away from what actually had been, or else from what the Romans thought should really have been the case, in those early days.

More definite records have been preserved of the ancient religion of China, a religion in vogue in the days which were almost as much earlier than Confucius as he was earlier than our own times.

At the beginning of Chinese History the rulers, though "canonised" under the title of *Emperor*, were patriarchal chieftains of the "hundred families" of immigrants that settled around a bend of the Yellow River, as Aryan tribes did along the Ganges; in both cases commencing to absorb or conquer the aborigines. In the Chinese records, after a description of some personages that are manifestly mythical, the earliest well-defined ruler is called the "Yellow Emperor."

* On the Origin of Poetry.

And we read that, somewhere after 2697 B.C., "He erected a palatial hall, where he offered sacrifice to the Sovereign Supreme, calling together the whole populace, and instructing them in religion and tribal regulations."

In this brief historical note we have but the designation of the supreme object of primitive worship, but from the classical *Odes* (literary versions of ancient folk-songs) and the *Canon of History* (moralisings of ancient rulers), we find, connoted by that designation, a God of righteousness and benevolence, as in the following quotations:

> (*Righteousness*) The majestic Sovereign Supreme has conferred on the people a moral sense, to comply with which would give them a right and constant spirit.
>
> The favour of the Sovereign Supreme is not settled unconditionally; upon the good He sends down manifold blessings; upon the evil-doer manifest calamities.
>
> Prince Wen, with the carefulness of a fluttering bird, served the Supreme intelligently, and secured abundant blessedness.
>
> It is not the Sovereign Supreme who has caused this evil time, but you [a depraved monarch] who have strayed from the old paths.

(*Goodness*) How vast is the Sovereign Supreme, the Ruler of the populace below. . . ! There is the majestic Sovereign Supreme; does He hate any one? How beautiful are the wheat and barley! What shining produce we shall gather at harvest-time! Have no doubts or anxieties, for the Sovereign Supreme is with you.

Great is the Sovereign Supreme, Down-bending in majesty; Surveying all regions; Seeking the repose of the populace. [As already quoted.]

Here we have more than a hint of China's ancient faith in the Most High, in utterances that are worthy to be placed beside those in the Scriptures concerning the God of Melchisedek, Abraham, Jethro, and Job. Yet, by the time of Lao Tzŭ and Confucius, these beliefs had become so attenuated that both philosophers virtually placed themselves in the attitude of path-seekers. If then the spiritual consciousness of a tribe in West Asia developed up from these rudiments, until it blossomed forth into literature such as the sublime epic of Job, the heaven-lit messages of Isaiah, and the immortal Psalms—aglow with "the kinship which every thoughtful human heart craves to find with a supreme unchanging, loving God," *

* R. E. Protheroe, *The Psalms in Human Life.*

the question naturally arises: How came an intelligent tribe in East Asia to neglect definite beliefs of a sort that we should imagine they would not willingly allow to die out?

In dealing with this question, let us first ask how any religion, of any sort, has been maintained as a national religion. Have not the chief factors been parental teaching and the atmosphere of the family circle? Whatever the tenets of the religion, or congeries of superstition, in any land, if the parents have (in the words of Deut. vi. 7) "taught them diligently unto their children, and talked of them when they sat in the house, and when they lay down, and when they rose up," then, whether it has been the God-worship of old Judæa, the folk-faith—part Taoist, part Buddhist—of the mediæval age in China, the Hindooism of India, the Buddhism of Burma, or the Muhammadanism of Arabian, Turkic, and Berber tribes—that religion has taken a permanent hold on the popular imagination. For in its atmosphere has each generation of children lived and moved and had its being, from the years that are most plastic and impressionable. On the other hand, let any religion, however excellent and ennobling, cease to be the religion of the family circle, let the parents cease to observe any of its ordinances in the home itself, let them fail to converse familiarly with their

children about it, then, although it may be acquired, as an acquired taste, by a certain percentage of each generation, it will inevitably cease to be an ingrained portion of the mental bone and tissue of the majority. Verily indeed is the family the microcosm of the nation ; the moral destiny of the race is bound up in the germinal feelings of little children, and the most powerful priests in the world are ever the mothers and fathers—did they but know it !

The religion of ancient China continued to be the tribal religion, impregnating even the popular ditties (of which the Odes are survivals), so long as it remained literally patriarchal, with each patriarch as priest of the family ; although the maternal influence may have been on the side of a secondary worship of the spirits of hills and streams. But when the original immigrant tribe multiplied and divided into several populous tribes, and all privilege of direct prayer to God became gradually vested in the person of each tribal chieftain ; and especially when, in course of time, all prerogatives of Divine worship were absorbed by the monarch, to be performed in but a few places for the whole land, then we have inevitably the spectacle of a popular religion being lost to the populace at large, by a double process of localisation—both as regards a restricted place of worship, and from the

fact of its privileges being vested in one man alone, as a priestly monopoly.

Here then we note three stages of priesthood: (1) that of the head of the family—which at its best resembled the priesthood recorded of Job (i. 5) on behalf of his sons and daughters; (2) that of the head of a tribe—a priesthood "after the order of Melchisedek" (and one noble prayer has been recorded from this stage of the ancient Chinese religion *); (3) that of the head of the nation—sometimes neglected for years together, but a custom preserved in survival by the Emperor of China, as "Son of the Most High," to this present century.†

This modification of the priesthood would seem on the surface, to have been an upward evolution as regards the honour paid to the Supreme. But, given a righteous and good Deity, the attractive force of His presence will be felt in inverse ratio

* Confucius tells us that the chieftain T'ang, who afterwards became King from 1766 to 1754 B.C., prayed to the Sovereign Supreme in the words: "I, the little child Li [using his baby name], presume to offer a dark-coloured ox in sacrifice, and dare to announce to Thee, O most majestic and imperial Supreme, that if I myself have committed sins, they are not to be attributed to the people of the land; but *if the people have committed sins, they must rest on my person.*"

† Once a year, at the autumn equinox, has the Emperor of China proceeded to the Temple of Heaven, after a night spent in solitary meditation, and prostrated himself before the stone tablet inscribed "Sovereign Supreme," offering the sacrifices as of old, and praying on behalf of the nation.

to the distance from which that presence is contemplated.

Is He the God of the family? Then the family bond may be close enough for each member of the family to call Him "my God"; and when that point has been reached, the sense of nearness will mean a magnetic force which may draw the soul into actual contact with God; and that fuller magnetic force of contact will draw the soul into realised communion with Him. For no lover-presence can exert a more real magnetism upon the adoring soul than that of a realised God, by whom and for whom our innermost souls were made.

Is He the God of the tribe? Then in so far as there is compactness in the tribal consciousness, each tribesman will feel that he has some part and lot in Him. Is He neither the God of the family nor of the tribe, but only the God of the nation at large, with just a distant monarch as His sole direct worshipper? Then the personal share in the Deity realised by each subject of the realm will seem to be fractionally small; until, as the kingdom grows to an empire, and the distance between ruler and ruled becomes greater, all sense of personal share in the Deity will become an almost imperceptible quantity.

In China, some centuries before the times of Confucius, the Sovereign Supreme had become

localised in the capital city, and on one or two mountain-tops; and monopolised by what we must regard as real, if unconscious *priestcraft.*

True priesthood, in its essence, represents man to God and God to man, so as to bear up man's needs before God, and to become a channel of blessing to man from God; ever with the design of opening, or consummating, a direct communication between each man and his God. And the ancient patriarchal priesthood finds its permanent essentials to-day wherever a father or mother leads family prayers in the household. It is not a monopoly of worship, but a leadership in devotion, and, for the yet unformed minds of the juveniles present, an initiation into the spirit and practice of devotion. Priestcraft is ever a degeneration from what may have been an entirely admirable priesthood.

True priesthood lays hold of the communicable *power* of God, for the advantage of others; priestcraft grasps at the absolute *authority* of God for the aggrandisement of itself.* The transition from priesthood to priestcraft may take place by easy stages; the first stage being reached from an over-anxiety to preserve the sanctity of devotion. But

* The argument for this latter is expressly stated in the letters of Thomas à Becket, on the basis of the syllogism that: All authority is derived from God. The clergy are the direct ministers of God. Therefore all authority is derived from God through them.

while priesthood may be entirely helpful to religion in its rudimentary conditions, priestcraft is inimical to its normal development. It is itself a devolution, which lets loose in the land forces of devolution, until, when priestcraft is fully dominant, all individual access to the Supreme is checked, and no truly spiritual religion remains. Thus priestcraft, in the end, becomes the parent of materialism.

In the case of ancient China, the imperial priestcraft was followed by a very literal materialisaton of the Supreme, in the minds of the populace, and eventually in the mind of a notable emperor.

From of old the Sovereign Supreme had been identified with *Heaven*, or the *Heaven Spirit*. But *Heaven*, before long, became popularly identified with the visible sky, which was coupled, as among all ancient nations, with the solid earth. So that, instead of the "Heaven Spirit" being regarded as "the Evolver of all things" (as in a very early utterance, quoted in China's ancient dictionary), "heaven and earth" were quoted as "the father-mother of all things" (as in the classical *Canon of History*). And at last, quite statedly, the emperor *Han* Wen Ti (179—157 B.C.), after fifteen years' neglect of any worship whatever, so identified the Supreme with the visible heavens, that "he erected two altars, one to imperial heaven, the other to royal earth, so as to give the pair equal

homage." * Thus was the God of ancient China robbed of His sovereign potencies of blessing. The once-glowing utterances concerning the Supreme became mere archæological relics; and the people of China were fain to worship local goddikins, as spirits of the soil, and guardians of the kitchen stove! These, together with the ghosts of ancestors, became the only recognised well-wishers of humanity, within the unseen realm. And to none of them were prayers offered for moral character-building.

This process of devolution, carried to completion four hundred years after the times of Lao Tzŭ and Confucius (producing a spiritual vacuum that Indian Buddhism and Chinese Taoism soon sought to fill), was already far advanced in the days of those sages. Both the Divine authority and power, recognised in the ancient religion of China, had become absorbed in the person of a series of rulers devoid of all spiritual aspiration, and, indeed, of any regal ability. So that the times were ripe for philosophical speculation and non-religious moralising. "History everywhere corroborates the assertion that abstract autonomic morality only appears at those seasons when there is also religious decay. It was during the decline of religion in Greece and Rome that the moral philosophers

* The Chinese *Records of the Han Dynasty.*

appeared." * And it was during the decadence of the imperial worship of the Sovereign Supreme, and with it all stated devotion to the Supreme, that China produced her philosophers.

Yet it remains true that:

> Man cannot be God's outlaw if he would,
> Nor so abscond him in the caves of sense
> But Nature still shall search some crevice out,
> With messages of splendour from that Source
> Which, dive he, soar he, baffles still and lures.†

Thus Lao Tzŭ, looking out upon Nature, recognised the presence of a subtle Normalising Force, which achieved much in the quiescent world of vegetation, and which he hoped might, under quiescent conditions, be a refining potency to certain good-natured souls. But there he stopped.

From a conception of this Normalising Force it was but a step, in the mind of the junior philosopher (a step in the direction of China's old religion), to the recognition of an Initiative Force in all moral order, a Force, personal or impersonal,‡

* Martensen, *Christian Ethics*, p. 17.

† James Russell Lowell, "The Cathedral."

‡ The most spiritual of China's semi-classical books is a work called *Pe Hu T'ung*, "White Tiger (Hall) Elucidations." It was written a few years before 90 A.D. at imperial orders, by literary men of note (who met in the "White Tiger Hall"), for the purpose of fixing Confucian orthodoxy. It declares that: "Heaven also has emotions of joy and anger, of grief and pleasure, over against the emotions of mankind, that Heaven and men may be brought to unitedness." Thus endowing *Heaven* with some attributes of personality.

which gives to man his virtuous impulses at the start of his career. But there he stopped. And as to any prayer for righteousness, in the case of those conscious of its opposite, he declared that: "He who offends against Heaven has no place for prayer" (*Analects*, III. xiii. 2).

"Cultivate the innocent quiescence of Nature." "Renovate yourselves in accord with the various relations of life." Such were the highest messages of China's two greatest teachers. But, truly, Nature's quietude is a poor salve for a soul that has lost its God. And principles of right relations with men form an inadequate curb on insistent human passion, so often prone to lawlessness. Lawlessness, political or moral, ever calls for a supreme Authority, to uphold the majesty of law and order. And the jarring passions of the soul need a supreme Power of communicable harmony. Humanity needs a Sovereign Ruler, enthroned in its springs of thought and deed, for it has not proved itself capable of efficient self-rule; and a great Helper towards righteousness, approachable by prayer, for its initial impulse towards Heavenly principle is apt to be very soon dissipated.

Also, given the "Majestic Sovereign Supreme, surveying all regions, seeking the repose of the populace"—by the appointment of a suitable monarch, of moral authority and might, as the

context of the ancient passage happens to be—that Sovereign Supreme will feel the need of enthroning *Himself* on earth, in the heart of humanity, wherever men are receptive of deep, large convictions of His own authority and power. For, reigning on high in the heavens, He must reign on earth also eventually.

We have seen how China missed her higher destiny, in early ages, as a Far-Eastern priestess * of God-worship and godliness in the earth; yet still she has her part to play in the God-ward education of humanity, by reason of her firm emphasis upon filial reverence, and upon relation-fulfilling as the basis of moral virtue. For never a nation is allowed its place on the stage of the world without making some contribution toward the great designs of the Eternal. A fact, this, which we can trace historically, as regards the Western world of antiquity, where we find the Sovereign Supreme calling each great race into His service, to bear some product eventually—perchance as an unexpected autumn-fruit—which shall tend to perpetuate His worship and renown upon earth.

The older Chaldean regime of molecular city-states was not completely swallowed up in the new

* Compare Isaiah lvi. 6: "Ye shall be named the priests of the Lord: men shall call you the ministers of our God."

Babylonian realm of Hammurabi without producing and preparing Abraham, the discoverer of the unity of God; Egypt's domination of Far-Western Asia—after the expulsion of the Hyksos dynasty—passed not away without her cradling and culturing Moses, the law-giver on God's behalf; the later Assyrian power fell not without drawing forth the qualities of Daniel, the stalwart intercessor with God; Persian supremacy decayed not before it had purged "the remnant of Israel" from their propensities towards a sub-division of Deity; the free national existence of the Jews did not become extinct without furnishing the world with a Hebrew Bible; their tributary existence under Rome ended not without providing the world with a Gospel; neither did Grecian civilisation cease to be dominant without furnishing the most suitable language * for enshrining that Gospel; nor did the Roman empire decay without furnishing an open door for the preaching of that Gospel in all the known world of the West. Add to all this the later arousal of wild forest-tribes, the Esau races of the Roman period (for the choosing of "Jacob" and the rejection of "Esau," instanced

* "What other language is so perfectly guided, and so little bound, by rules? The love of vivid constructions; the use of the aorist, so rapid, so fruitful in resource, so subtle; the handling of the particles which bulk so little, and mean so much, are only a few of its admirable qualities."—E. C. E. Owen.

by Malachi and St. Paul, was but the first act of a great world drama) to form the basis of dominant nations, holding the "birthright" of missionary priesthood for the whole modern world. And such a chain of facts, extending over so many centuries, can hardly be dismissed as a series of merely fortuitous coincidences. Rather, throughout the whole, do we see the Sovereign Supreme, with far-reaching purpose, surveying all regions, and seeking the repose of earth's populace, under His own sacred rule of authority and might.

Materialism can furnish no science of history, except one of blindest mechanics; and agnostic cynicism can only project its dark shadow upon luminous fact. "A due recognition of Heaven is indispensable to any attempted knowledge of men"; words of Confucius already written as the motto of this chapter. And, accepting the old Chinese account of the Sovereign Supreme, we may surely see, amid all the confused happenings of mundane affairs, the outlines of "a mighty drama, enacted on the theatre of Infinitude, with Eternity for a background, whose author is God, and whose purpose and thousand-fold moral leads us up to the . . . throne of God." *

As the earlier patriarchal religion of God-worship,

* Carlyle (on Voltaire).

found among certain tribes of East and West Asia, would seem, in both regions, to have been so remarkably similar, and we have inquired into the reasons why that of the East came to be dissipated and lost, it remains to inquire how that of the West came to be preserved and developed.

A superficial glance at the religious history of the Hebrews, from the Mosaic period, yields rather surprising results. China lost her good old religion through a double localisation of worship; and in the case of the incipient nation of Israel we find what was, apparently, a very similar localisation. At first, the popular recognition of a Sovereign Supreme was secured through vivid assertions of His absolute majesty, and authoritative requirements; the latter in a code of laws adapted to the moral consciousness of the twelve tribes of liberated bondmen; with various safeguards to preserve their God-worship free from polytheistic and immoral adulterations. But, following all this, we find established, instead of the old patriarchal prayer-leadership, something approaching a priestly monopoly of direct access to God, and also something very like a literal localisation of the Eternal in a certain priest-dominated spot.

Here are two elements of retrogression from patriarchal days—and we need not shrink from using that word. Yet, on further consideration,

we begin to see that some sort of double localisation (by means of a stated priesthood and a stated place of worship) may have been a necessity, in that little land, surrounded as it was by aggressive heathenism of a corrupt passion-appealing nature.

God's high purpose was evidently so to bless the Hebrew race as to make it a centre of blessedness to the whole human race. And the problem involved may be represented in parable, as the problem of lighting a beacon-fire on a stormy night. This, in old times, would be achieved by the use of flint and steel, to produce sparks of fire in a shielded spot, which sparks would light a torch in that shielded spot. And only after full ignition in that confined space would the torch be carried into the open, to light a great blaze on the hill-top, to be seen far and wide. Such were the purposes to be served by the priestly and literal localisation of the worship of God, in Israel's tempestuous night of national beginnings.

The principle was that of *concentration, the basis of extension*—a leading principle in the dynamics of God throughout the ages. Let us rapidly glance over some facts in the light of this principle.

From among the whole populace of southern Chaldea, during the period of the Hammurabian conquests, there was the selection of one responsive man, Abraham; whose conception of God as one

Elohim may well have been assisted by the absorption of the various civic deities (severally called *El*) into the new monarchy—for in those days a conquering realm absorbed the gods of the conquered cities. This emigrant ponderer was disciplined towards absolute surrender to God, and proved amenable to that discipline, even at its extreme behests. First, then, the selection of one man, and of his family after him. Later, from among the various clans which sprang from that family, there was the selection of one clan, and especially a certain section of that clan, whose whole attention, preserved by many a detail in daily life, was to be concentrated upon God, to keep alive the godliness of the nation. Together with this there was also an appointed centre for worship ; for if rudimentary minds are to realise that God is everywhere, they must first be taught that God is somewhere. And for every one there were appointed stated days and seasons of special attention to the things of God ; for if men are to realise that every day belongs to God, they must first be taught that some days belong to Him.

Moreover, as the moral qualifications for sacred offices are not always readily transmissible from father to son, and such office-holding, in the absence of full qualification, is apt to degenerate into repulsive officialism, a corrective was provided

against over-centralisation. There was a selection of certain men, known as prophets, outside the priestly order, for a less formal, but equally real, concentration upon the things of God. These men were concerned with no transmitted formulæ of devotion, which might be learnt apart from any heart-devotion whatever. Instead, they confronted the national conscience with burning messages, which they were fired to deliver, chiefly in days of degeneracy, and often under conditions of personal danger. The prophets, drawn out from definite schools of training, or else from ordinary life, afforded the safeguards which an otherwise complete monopoly of spiritual leadership, by the priesthood, might well require. And these prophets emphasised the claims of God perhaps more than the priests.

Thus, on two parallel lines, each corrective of the other, was manifested the Providential rule of concentration, the basis of extension. And spite all national vicissitudes, and all popular retrogressions, the primal verities of godliness were preserved and developed, and enshrined in a collection of volumes which have eventually become part of the great sacred Book for the world at large.

It is interesting to note that the Hebrew Bible, as regards nine-tenths of its bulk, was produced

by men who, from the priestly standpoint, were regarded as laymen. And that, while the prophets and psalmists were loyal to the priesthood, and the specific place of sacrificial worship, their writings are quite untrammelled by either form of localisation.* Their great message rings ever true to the spiritual aspirations of the race as a whole: that in God there is majestic Authority to demand man's obedience, inflexible Righteousness to make that demand appeal to the conscience, winsome Benevolence to make that demand appeal to the affections, and communicable Power, obtainable from "waiting upon the Lord," to assist us in meeting those demands, and to aid us in our manifold necessities.

* Thus, there could have been little, if any, dominant *priest-craft* in the land of the Hebrews.

ESSENTIALS OF A GOD-STORY

"The Hebrew, by introducing himself to the secret place of the human heart, and sitting there as incubator over the awful germs of the spiritualities that connect man with the unseen worlds, has perpetuated himself as a power in the human system: he is co-enduring with man's race, and careless of all revolutions in literature, or in the composition of society."—De Quincey, *Works*, x. 250.

III

ESSENTIALS OF A GOD-STORY

Our knowledge of things is largely an estimate of differences and contrasts. We hardly know anything except in contrast with its opposite. The fact of contrariety, of difference, conditions our realisation of everything which comes within the range of our perceptions. And, the West Asian Scriptures having been so long acclimatised among us as "the Bible," or even as "our English Bible," has just this one disadvantage to us: the difficulty we feel in arriving at any first-hand estimate of their precise value.

There are children living among the forests of Scandinavia or of North America, to whom the towering pines and mysterious glooms have become quite commonplace; for they have never lived in treeless cities. There are others, brought up amid the Alps or the Rockies, to whom the awful heights of snowy splendour appear quite ordinary

things; for they have never lived on monotonous plains.

The height of mountains is measured from sea-level, and a man's wealth from absolute zero. Mont Blanc is, in round numbers, sixteen thousand feet higher than no mountain at all; Dives has so much more revenue than no revenue at all. But it is difficult for us, in estimating the value of the Old Testament God-story (and still more that of the New Testament Gospel) to place ourselves actually in the position of having no such heaven-aspiring revelation, and no such wealth of teaching concerning the Eternal.

And even if the heights and quantities were all comparatively estimated, there remains a quality hardest of all to measure—the quality of gentle winsomeness, the homelike appeal, which the soul of man will scarcely find elsewhere in ancient literature. This quality—the all-in-all of qualities to the child-heart of humanity—can never be reckoned up or figured out. It can only be known, appreciated, prized to the full, in the moments or hours when everything of the nature of a heart-home seems to be gone.

Now and then, being minished and brought low, in the nethermost depths, we may catch a glimpse of the true value of the Bible. Let a man be laid under stress of a sickness which sickens all thought,

an adversity which banishes all hope, and a heart-isolation that blocks out all vision of God, until he is driven to quote as his own words:

> I can no more; for now it comes again,
> That sense of ruin which is worse than pain,
> That masterful negation and collapse
> Of all that makes me man; *

but haply retaining enough force of soul to repeat over and over again: "O Lord, my strength and my redeemer";—then such a one may perchance gain in that hour some due estimate of the majestic facts from which those ancient Scriptures sprang.

Depths abysmal have been traversed by many who have reached the mid-age of life, for the world is not all a mere workshop, with an unbroken series of commonplace tasks, still less a playground with an unbroken series of shallow amusements; depths there will be at the end of the smoothest or gayest life; and, what is more, there is all through life a daily need for those glowing certitudes which such seasons of gloom prove to be so indispensable. For, amid all its commonplace toil, and amid all its day-dreams, our human nature stands ever in need of these two vast realities; the authoritative mastery and communicable might of our God. It was the Divinely wrought sense of deep need,

* Newman, *Dream of Gerontius.*

concerning these self-same things, that made the Hebrew lift up his eyes unto the hills of God, whence cometh all help ; and it is the living and throbbing assurance of sacred help, " streaming thence in fresh supplies," which fills his Bible, and makes it the soul's interpreter and guide.

Reverting to our first chapter ; when our reading of the Old Testament has been sufficiently attentive and constant, we find before long that this volume as a whole is the shrine of a great Nature-Force, both human and divine, with a tendency to penetrate our lives as we read therein. And much of the result desired by Lao-Tzŭ, from a quiescent attitude towards Nature, is realised as we surrender our minds to this Force of quiet permeation.

To the average reader, the general scenery of the Old Testament seems made up, not of towering peaks and abysmal ravines, but on the whole of hills and dales of homelike experience. It is half forgotten that any great passion of intensity was involved in the making of this moral landscape; even as it is generally forgotten that all the lesser hills and vales of earth, as well as its awful heights and depths, were at first rough-hewn by gigantic upheavals, when the heart of the earth was a furnace.

Not from the Scriptures do we usually realise the imperative forcefulness of appeal produced by a drama of human passion, as contained be-

tween the covers of an engrossing novel. There steals over us instead an appeal of a more subtle quality, and yet one which may prove more powerful in the end, by reason of its quiet cumulative influence. To cherish these volumes as sacred counsellors is to feel them exert an appealing winsomeness, as of an old friend who comes to stay with us, knowing us just as we are; a cheering companion when we yield up our leisure, patiently averse to chiding after any neglect, and a veritable mother-nurse when we find ourselves soul-sick.

Yet, as few of the gentlest mother-comforters have become such without passing through experiences of much stress and intensity, it is well to remind ourselves that the Bible is an exceedingly intense book. Hardly a volume of it but was written under full absorption of passionate feeling, by men who poured out their molten thought as from a furnace seven times heated. George Meredith's words, of a journalist hero of his: "Fervidness is the core of style," are nowhere truer than of most of these old writings. Indeed Archbishop Alexander * calls the prophets "precursors of the voice of a Free Press." And may we not, without too great strain of language, regard the prophets as producing so many glorified leading articles under the conditions of rapid journalism,

* *Witness of the Psalms*, p. 5.

rather than those of more leisurely composition ? * Their literary style is the direct outcome of the writers' living earnestness—an earnestness which cuts its own road, and makes it a highway at last.

A strange comparison, but still a pertinent one, may be drawn from Far Eastern life. For psalms and prophecies are still poured forth in China, if psalms and prophecies glowing with flames of hell rather than fires of heaven. There is a twice-repeated phrase in the Proverbs, which we of the West may, happily, have failed to understand. The "brawling woman," in the technical sense of the Oriental phrase, has long given place in the West to that diminishing species, the common scold—who is generally deficient in poetic imagination. But in China—that land of survivals—she may still be heard, in some regions, pouring forth her impassioned complaint by the hour together. The language is imprecatory, the words unwritable, but the rhythm and parallelism, born of great elemental passion, are such that, were the inspiration from above instead of from below, they would form no mean parallel to the harmonic prose and elemental poetry of the Hebrews. By reversing the negative we gain a living picture of

* The one leisurely production in the Old Testament is the book of Job, where we find the stylist at work, with the widest selection of words, weighing over each one as he sets it down, with almost Chinese literary patience.

both prophet and psalmist, in their declamations and in their songs, under stress of God-directed intensity. And the permanence of appeal in their writings is but another instance of concentration, the basis of extension. Their thoughts and emotions, concentrated under Divine impulse, have become for all time a source of heart-moving energy, raising the moral temperature of the world.

If we sit down to read the Bible as any other book, we soon find in it qualities which transcend those of any other book. For as the terse clauses of our deepest poems expand, to a cultured imagination, into far more than words can express, so the simplest sentences of the Bible may open up, to a lowly heart, vistas of glowing infinity. In that unpromising booklet, the Lamentations of Jeremiah, so dull to the average reader (unless his mind pictures the anguished conditions of forcible deportation from a passionately loved fatherland), we are startled to find the trustful words: "The Lord is my portion, said my soul, therefore will I hope in Him." Words which, when allowed to invest our thought, may produce the spiritual equivalent of the visions reported by Oriental crystal-gazers. Yet in this case there is conjured up no evanescent fabric of dreamland, but the assurance of home-like reality; the earnest indeed of a Paradise regained.

With such a passage as this before us, we are able to appreciate the legend that when Adam and Eve had lost their Eden, God, in His kindness, made dim within their minds all remembrance of that blissful home. When sons and daughters were born to them, these too were content with their surroundings, not knowing what they had lost. And Eve was content in their contentment—until at last she bore a son unlike the others, and then her heart grew wistful. For this little child would be found listening with rapt expression of face, to strains of heavenly music, uncaught by Eve's ear now ; and in the pupils of the lad's eyes she could see waving branches of the long-forgotten trees of Paradise.

The story has been applied to our poets and artists,* but it applies the more to the old Hebrew ponderers, who walked with their God. To the initiated, our noblest poets and painters, and musicians, bring much enhanced sensibility, from realms of beauty that seem quite transcendental. But for humanity at large, which includes the uncultured—the simply human folk, these ancient writers do far more than this. As we gaze into their eyes, or haply through them, the sense of "circumscription and confine," in which we may have become immersed, is broken up by a vision of

* By Theodore Watts-Dunton, in his monograph on Rossetti.

wide horizons, and the dull ache of soul-isolation is soothed by a dawning assurance of ineffable relatedness.

If various words of the Old Testament do this for us, then although we may give an exalted place to all things æsthetic, considered as such, apart from any high themes they are capable of suggesting, and, on occasion, may allow ourselves to be lost in their etherial cloudland, we shall still realise that the literary results of old-world ponderings upon the great Heart of ideality have brought to men that which the most refined æsthetic culture could never have yielded—an indication of the Way Everlasting, the way home from dissonant soul-stress to a regained harmony with the Divine.

It is eminently desirable that our sons and daughters should be delivered from the coarsening influences of "Philistinism" (to quote the old phrase of Matthew Arnold) and come under the spell of all possible "sweetness and light." Yet it may be called to mind that those ultra-Philistines, the Frankish tribes under Charlemagne, with their simple religion of homage to the highest they knew, of loyalty to their chieftains, of fearlessness in danger, of absolute truthfulness at all times—held in common with our own remote ancestors, the earlier Germanic tribes—were far more *men* to be respected, than were the polished and perfumed

lords and ladies of the highly æsthetic society—perhaps the most æsthetic the world has seen—which adorned the court of the *Grand Monarque* in its later days; when the primal manliness of reverence, of loyalty, courage and sincerity, with its attendant virtues of womanhood, was all frowned down as outside the sphere of good taste.

In every age it has been possible to absorb all the gains from things æsthetic, with a net result of polished selfishness or perfumed immorality. And thus æsthetic culture has never proved an efficient substitute for simple godliness in the evolving of true manhood and womanhood, however refining all sweetness and light may be when associated with the ineffable Source of all loveliness.

As with Nature, so especially with æsthetics—what we gain therefrom depends upon the personal qualities we take with us into that enchanted region. Our gains from all things æsthetic are conditioned by the sort of *Æsthesis* we have made our guiding spirit. Is she a spirit of purest admiration for the beautiful, and, withal, of reverence for the All-Beautiful? Then she may lead us away from, and not into, the bogs of unblessed sensuality. And we may prove that "the beautiful is as useful as the useful—perhaps more so." * Is she merely a

* Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, unabridged edition; the words of M. Myriel, the good bishop.

spirit in quest of sensuous mystery ?—even as one has said : " The mystical in Art, the mystical in Life, the mystical in Nature, is what I am looking for. It is absolutely necessary for me to find it somewhere." Then she may seem to us a cultured impulse, but will not be a safe guide. For the words quoted were written retrospectively, as a confession from a prison-house, by one who became the spendthrift of his own genius, and " ended in horrible disgrace."

To affirm that these artless Hebrews of old time have done more for the ennobling of humanity in general than any artists or poets or musicians have done for their circle of initiated souls, is to make a great claim for them. And yet, is not that claim abundantly justified ? The Most High, realised as man's Well-wisher, who is certain to help us toward our highest destiny, as we pray to Him—a destiny far beyond the sublimest dreams of painter or poet or musician, even as the ancient psalmist sang : " Thou wilt show me the path of life : In Thy presence is fulness of joy ; In Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore " ;—to gain for ourselves the assurance which lit the lives of these men is surely to gain something precious beyond words.

On the other hand, the fact of God being our Well-wisher, and our Helper towards a true per-

sonality through prayer to Him, seems from our modern religious standpoint to be so rudimentary a conception that, with all the New Testament developments of these rudiments, and with all the ramifications of these developments which our greatest Christian thinkers have brought to us, we, the inheritors of the ages, are often in danger of losing our grasp of the innermost core of the whole, from its very simplicity; forgetting that all else of spiritual verity which the ages have given us has been built upon this simple basis of true religion, even as, in music, each full orchestral chord is built upon the simple key-note.

Years of experience have taught the wisest missionaries that, when preaching the Gospel to a crowd of non-Christian natives, it is always desirable, with a view to securing some definite start towards the goal of life, to end with the practical challenge: "One thing you must grasp in all this Good News, namely that God is your great Well-wisher, who will assuredly help you towards rightness of life, as you pray to Him. Pray therefore with all your might day by day, pray Him to strengthen your conscience and character, and see what the result will be. I know that you will find right-doing easier then, and with it you will gain some practical proof of much else that I have been

saying. Moral strength from the unseen! Pray hard for it, and you will get it."

It is fitting to deal thus with men at the earliest dawn of a new spiritual consciousness. And for those who have been, all their lives, familiar with full Gospel teaching, many a sermon might be lifted to much higher dynamic usefulness were the preacher to plead that a stated time—perhaps half-an-hour—be given each day to earnest prayer for the moral power which such prayer would assuredly bring. For this, perchance, is the practical application of the Gospel which is too often neglected; and for lack of "waiting upon the Lord" * the Gospel as a whole is rendered of meagre effect—an enlightening belief, but of little or no dynamic result upon conduct, and temper, and character generally.

Well did Augustine say that "The New Testament is latent, or hidden, in the Old, and the Old Testament is patent, or revealed, in the New." That God gives definite strength to the soul by means of persevering prayer—His opportunity of blessing—is surely a dominant element in the Gospel itself. It is indeed half the Gospel, in its

* Because Jesus, in his primary lesson on the subject, was anxious to secure *quality* in private prayer, as opposed to *quantity* of Pharisaic "babblement," some have deduced the remarkable conclusion that brevity is the soul of true devotion, and prolonged supplication is discountenanced in the highest teaching of Christianity!

essential rudiments. The other half, in the Old Testament, is (what we should hardly expect to find as "glad tidings") the Moral Authority of God. Let us consider these two sides of the Gospel latent in the Old Testament, for such a study may prove to be a study of the very tissue of that for which the life and teaching of Jesus stand.

"The Lord reigneth!" "Thy God reigneth!" was the message of prophet and psalmist which first gave us the term "glad tidings," in which the old God-story became a *Gospel*, in the primary sense of the phrase. And in this message the sense of authoritative justice, as well as goodness and power to help, is markedly prominent.

The Old Testament disclosure of God, as reflected in the human consciousness of its writers, presents to the mind at once the simplest and the most complex considerations. The simplest, because it represents God as our intimate Well-wisher,* towards which fact, when sympathetically taught, the sub-conscious instinct of mankind leaps up into conviction. The most complex, because it

* "For, ah, who can express
How full of bonds and simpleness
Is God,
How narrow is He,
And how the wide, waste field of possibility
Is only trod
Straight to His homestead in the human heart."
Coventry Patmore, "Legem Tuam Dilexi."

embraces all authority suggested by an authoritative conscience, and every sort of rightness imaginable, including some sorts which pass the bounds of the imagination. In its simple aspect it is typified by the white light of day ("God is a sun," O.T.; "God is light," N.T.); in its complex aspect, by the thousand tints, and all the "ultra-violet rays," or less-known rays, which also belong to that profoundly mysterious light. But for our present purpose we cannot do better than adopt the simple analysis already quoted: (1) Authoritative justice and benevolence, and (2) Power to help the praying soul.

I. *Authoritative justice and benevolence.*—i. *Authority.* Starting with the conception of the Supreme as their Well-wisher, God's pupils were led on to the conviction of His authority, as One to whom they belonged, as One who must be obeyed, and in regard to whom the benefits of relatedness were conditioned by obedience.* And even at this early stage, the religion of homage to God, wherever it has been found, parts company with so many other religious conceptions. The whole history of religion has scarcely a record of any truly authoritative deity save One. Good spirits have been invoked, evil spirits have been appeased,

* Thus, a characteristic prayer is: "I am Thine, save me"; and a characteristic consideration is: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

and both may have been regarded as holding certain rights of worship in certain places. But the good spirits have been regarded as merely good-natured and friendly, and neither the diffused Blandness called Brahma, nor the transcendental Passionlessness called Buddha, nor any inferior friendly deity, has ever been conceived as formulating the authoritative fiat: "Thou shalt . . . Thou shalt not . . ." as lord and master of the human conscience.

In distinction from all these gods many and lords many, the Sovereign Supreme holds one relation towards humanity and towards the universe at large, which He can in no wise abandon ("For He cannot disown Himself," 2 Tim. ii. 13): the relation of Absolute Monarch and Supreme Overruler. From the nature of things He may not force His desires upon will-endowed beings, if He is to gain that kind of submission which alone is of moral value—the glowing submission of the will. But for God to be God at all, He must be authoritative. And there seems to be no primary, axiomatic truth, which, in our days, needs more reiterated emphasis than this.

Confucius formed his conceptions of duty in the days of patriarchal ideals of rulership. Conditions have so much altered in China of late, that his tenets as to the filial status of the populace towards local and central rulers are regarded as a

dead letter by Young China itself. The Old Testament system of godliness was evolved in the days when absolute monarchy was the one form of government throughout all Asia; and that of the New Testament was enunciated in days of much absolute despotism, or mastery as of a slave-owner over his slaves.* And these conditions have long been regarded as archaic throughout the Western world. On the fall of the Roman empire, there arose here and there chieftains and over-lords, some of them called kings and emperors. But throughout the Middle Ages, in the presence of powerful barons, Church prelates, and a growing individuality among the higher populace,† the absolutism of the king or emperor, except when associated with commanding military prowess, was of a tempered and modified sort. And gradually absolutism merged into constitutionalism, and constitutionalism into actual or virtual republicanism throughout most regions of the West.

Thus, from the influence of the political *zeitgeist*, and the widespread impatience of all but self-rule, every word in the Scriptures indicative of the authoritative rulership of God, falls on minds ac-

* The word *despotes*, "a master possessed of absolute ownership and uncontrolled power," occurs eight times in the New Testament, with no sinister significance.

† Three competing factors noticed at length by Guizot, in his *Civilisation in Europe*.

customed to regard such terms as subject to a liberal discount. The modern reader of such passages is under the spell of the almost resistless illusion that, as absolutism has been abolished among earthly rulers, it must also have waned in regard to Him who is called, in old-world language, King of kings and Lord of Lords.

Yet it needs but a moment's consideration to assure us that no such modification of the Divine monarchy can ever have taken place, however much our self-will may essay to strike out the keystone of the universe. The Eternal, before whom a thousand ages are as a moment, the Creator and Evolver of all things, the Owner of all forces, the Source of all life, the Lord of the conscience, cannot by any possibility waive aught of His absolutism, but reigns the enthroned Supreme for evermore. The blessedness He offers, and the blessedness for which each worshipper must pray, is His unimpeded governance in human hearts and lives.* Then, when His sublime authority receives a full response within the soul of the man or the nation, it is found to be ever associated with a force working for blessedness.

* This indeed is suggested in an enlightened utterance, in the ancient Chinese *Book of Rites*: "The worship offered by the virtuous will receive its due reward of happiness. But it will not be what the world calls happiness. It will be the happiness of preparedness—based on complete submission (to Heaven)."

God is ! God reigns ! was the message that fired all the prophets till John the Baptist. Under Moses, this basal message was ramified into : " He must reign—in place of all selfish passion, and in place of all imaginary and meagre substitutes for Him. And as the first sign of devotion to any one truly beloved or honoured is a profound respect for that one's name, so God's great name is to be hallowed supremely. And while it is a Divine ordinance that the tasks of life be fulfilled by all with diligence, men's exalted relations with God demand certain times, toil-free, for meditative devotion. The earthly types of His supreme parentage are to be honoured with due respect. Human life—whose source is God—must be held sacred. Private relations and personal belongings—the rights of others—must be held inviolate ; and that valued property of a neighbour, his good name, must never be wantonly injured. Lastly—most inward requirement of all—the heart that lusts for more than its share of good things must be rigorously checked." All this that God may reign, and reign as " *our* God." * For apart from His reign on earth, there can be no true law and order.

* Thus interpreted, " The Ten Commandments represent to us in fact and in idea the granite foundations on which the world is built up, without which all theories of religion are but as shifting and fleeting clouds."—Dean Stanley, *Jewish Church*, vol. i. p. 150.

Each seeming gain of advancing prosperity will be marred with new discords, unless the primary requirement of personal harmony with the Supreme is joyously fulfilled. Our God reigning—ours personally, socially, nationally—then all our problems are taken in hand by authoritative Omnipotence. Such was the broad lesson taught, from Sinai onwards, in precept and history, to the Hebrews of old, and the lesson which is being taught—as men will hear it—to every nation beneath the heavens to-day.

ii. *Authoritative Justice.* From a recognition of God's supreme authority, there grew up in the Hebrew mind the conviction that this vast authority—never devoid of powers of executive when the time came—is always on the side of absolute right; that God is a personal Force of justice and judgment. And this fact called forth their rapturous admiration.

To us, of modern days, *justice* is a rather frigid word, and *judgment*, in the sense of righteous vengeance, an undoubtedly stern word. But it was otherwise with the Hebrews, in so many instances, for they measured these quantities from zero. And, thus measured, justice and judgment are seen to be sublimities indeed.

There is one passage in the Psalms which we of the West can never understand—except by trans-

porting ourselves into the national life of the Orient. We read: "Also, unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy (*hesed*, kindness or grace), for Thou renderest to every man according to his work" (lxii. 12). How are we likely to understand this, with justice as a common essential of our civic life? We have struggled through forgotten centuries of travail, when "my right" was the goal of our striving. But under Oriental potentates the very word *rights* is either unknown or is a very recent importation from Western vocabularies,* while the word *wrongs* is one of the commoner words of daily use.

Of an ideal ruler we read (in Psalm lxxii): "He shall judge the poor of the people. He shall save the children of the needy; He shall deliver the needy when he crieth, and the poor that hath no helper. He shall redeem their soul from oppression and violence." And as a result: "They shall bless him all the day long. His name shall endure for ever."

These words happen to be historically true of Confucius himself. They furnish an explanation of what may have puzzled many of us—the secret of his perpetual fame in China. In his maxims, as read in English, he may be convincing, but to the average reader he is little more fascinating than a

* In China, for instance, it is newly quoted under the clumsy term, "advantage-authority," or authoritative advantage.

platitude-monger who has merely discovered the obvious. His conclusions are valuable, but they seem such ordinary ones. Has it been, forsooth, an innate love of plain speaking that has urged the Chinese populace to rank his name far above that of any of their gods? True it is that the literary style of the original language is superb, and for its acquisition by imitation (together with sundry presents to headquarters) the reward has been rulership over cities and provinces. Hence he could not but be respected among the *literati*, in accord with Dryden's too badly worded couplet:

> For 'twas their duty, all the learned think,
> T'espouse his cause by whom they eat and drink.

But, even thus, what has there been in Confucius which has so awakened and sustained the *popular* devotion accorded him in China for many centuries? His proclamation of obvious duty alone —in an archaic language unreadable by the populace—can hardly have been a sufficient factor.

The reply is surely: The man behind the maxims, who first as magistrate, then as State-judge, when law and order were well-nigh decayed, when oppression and violence stalked over the land, did actually what the Psalm depicts—mete out equal justice to rich and to poor, to the influential and to those who had no backing whatever. He was the righter of wrong for the *poor and needy*; and

in the memory of this authoritative justice of his, more than in anything he said, lies the secret of his undying fame among a fourth of the human race.

Official justice in Asia has been so precious a thing—so rare and so costly—that to this day, in many a region, every winner of a case at law most naturally thanks the judge for his *hesed*—his kindness, grace, or "mercy." And in lands where the Western resident may still make the words of Koheleth his own, seeing around him "the oppressions that are done under the sun," it needs little to assure him that authoritative justice and judgment may be the highest form of public kindness imaginable.

We have to bless the coming of the Kingdom of God into our civil and criminal legislature, for the fact that the surpassing value of Divine justice can hardly, in our minds, be estimated from zero. It is none the less precious. And in our wider outlook upon the tangled affairs of the world, it is still matter for exultation that authoritative Justice has the upper hand, with full powers of executive, as will be proved in the long run.

Apart from a close acquaintance with Oriental conditions, and some personal heart-stirrings at the piercing cry of the oppressed—the cry to Heaven for the justice they have no prestige to grasp, and no money to buy—some prayers for

vengeance in certain Psalms may seem to us strangely incongruous in a sacred Book, especially when read or chanted in our comfortable church-services, where the harsher facts of life are lost in celestial melody. And some remarks on these "imprecatory prayers" seem called for, not omitting the Psalm which has been called the most revengeful of all.

That psalm, the hundred and thirty-seventh, as set to music by Gounod, and not usually sung in churches in that dramatic rendering, strikes the ear as fiercely barbaric. It rises to a pitch of rage equal, surely, to that of the first singers of the *Marseillaise*, but surpasses that song by including the infants of Babylon in its objective. And with regard to this Psalm it has been asked: "Was not the captivity under Nebuchadnezzar a matter for which the Jews were themselves to blame? Added to their religious corruption, had not their government long since grown rotten, and become a menace to the great power of Babylon? And—witness the case of Daniel and his friends—were not the captives fairly well treated? Why then should there be this outburst of ferocity when some of these so-called captives, condemned to no drudgery, but taking their ease on a river-bank, were asked good-humouredly for one of their native songs?"

Let us first deal with the assumption of irritation on light grounds, in this specific instance, before considering the more difficult subject of the "revengeful" spirit manifest in this class of Psalms generally.

In this Psalm, the reference to Edom siding with the invader helps to fix the occasion which called forth this strong language. First, it is an historic fact that Tiglath Pileser III., a year before his death, became "king of Babylon as well as of Assyria," and that this title was still held by his third successor. That monarch, Sennacherib, gives his own account of the invasion of Judah,* saying: "But as for Hezekiah of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke, I besieged forty-six of his strong cities, with fortresses and small cities of their environs without number, and by casting down their walls, and advancing the engines, by an assault of light-armed soldiers, by breaches, by striking, by axes, I took thence two hundred thousand, one hundred and fifty persons, both young and old, male and female. . . ." Of Edom he says that its king, Malik-rammu, kissed his feet, "brought rich presents and heavy gifts with merchandise," and assisted him against Judah.

Here was a ruthless invasion of a pacific land, and an enormous deportation of its people, ap-

* On the "Taylor cylinder" in the British Museum.

parently to the realm of Babylon (see 2 Kings xvii. 24), a campaign of unprovoked bloodshed which laid waste and well-nigh depopulated a flourishing region; and in which—from what we know of Assyrian cruelty—it is more than probable that many Jewish infants were "dashed against the rock." Let the bare historical jottings be filled out by an enlightened imagination, and it will be realised that the anguished cry for vengeance against the spoiler, and the treacherous neighbour also, had a terrible provocation. The political crimes of Assyrian Babylon were such that the prophet Isaiah, in a lengthy outburst of denunciation (chapters xiii. and xiv. 1–23) looked forward to its annihilation as one of the most righteous acts of God. And St. John, ages after, with this history, and that of the later captivity, before him, devotes a long section of the Apocalypse (chapters xvii. to xix. 1–5) to the destruction of what the name "Babylon" stood for, and quotes heavenly songs of exultation concerning the "true and righteous judgments of God," when that destruction was accomplished.

With regard to the general question, it is obvious that the desire to be righted, as individuals, as a class, as a nation, is by no means necessarily a religious sentiment. *Dieu et mon droit* has been a fine national motto for England, but it has not

bespoken for its possessors any great depth of religious feeling. In China, large sections of the populace associate the (newly imported) word *rights* with the religion of the Bible; and argue that the "Western religion" must be superior to any religion of China, because under its sway law-courts are courts of justice. Their insight into the rudiments of Comparative Religion may be of a sound philosophical order, from the pragmatic standard. The stay-at-home advocates of the ingenious theory that each non-Christian nation already possesses the religion best suited to it would find their theorising rudely shaken had they themselves to live for a few months, as unmoneyed natives, under a national executive not yet modified by the Christian religion. Yet still the desire of numerous Chinese clans to profess and call themselves Christians, for the one purpose of gaining, under Western prestige, their bare rights at law in Chinese *yamens*, may be anything but a sign of inward and spiritual grace. Indeed, these seekers for class-rights, or what they deem to be such, are the very ones which every experienced Protestant missionary studiously avoids receiving as candidates for Church membership. His personal disclaimer is: "Who made *me* a ruler and a judge?" and his doctrine for them is drawn from the Sermon on the Mount—to the effect that godliness may be

full often the art of suffering wrong, rather than the means of gaining one's rights, when public justice is not a thing of wide currency.

Much lies in the antithesis of *public* and *personal* affairs, so largely quoted among the Chinese, and so often overlooked in our Western analyses of Scriptural teaching. Let it be set down most emphatically that the Sermon on the Mount describes the *personal*, and not the *public* side of the coming of the Kingdom of God; it describes how a true relatedness to the Heavenly Father will affect a man's personal character and outlook under various limitations of public law and executive. For lack of this clear-cut distinction, we often read that "Government on the lines of the Sermon on the Mount would be an impossibility"—a very sound axiom, certainly, but proclaimed abroad with iconoclastic elation, as an important discovery, whereby the Sermon on the Mount itself is discredited! Whereas that Sermon was delivered, not to the powers that be, whose office it is to administer strict, unforbearing justice, but to individual disciples who, with their successors, were about to suffer more than two hundred years of wrong.*

* The first legal standing for Christians, in the Roman empire, was granted by Galerius, in the year 311 A.D. Till then they had no public rights whatever.

In the absence of any public justice, true godliness—the reign of God within the man—would point to the graceful yielding of such personal rights as could not be publicly obtained.* But on the coming of the kingdom of God into public legislature, the doctrine of forbearance would be considerably modified. There would be public reprimand for personal insult beyond a certain point, public disgrace for the coat-stealer, and imprisonment for the oppressor. Under the rule of God in the public administration of the laws, it may often be the duty of the citizen, as such, not to forbear beyond certain limits, but to commit criminals for prosecution; though, all the while, in his heart, as a private individual, he may exercise the sincerest charity towards the wrongdoer. If thus with the ordinary citizen, so especially with the magistrate. In his public capacity strict non-forbearance is his clear duty; although, as a private individual, deep compassion will be the sign of his godliness. In both these contrasting aspects, every modern magistrate and citizen may be a true child of his Father in Heaven. For God as judge, God in His public capacity before the universe, must always be just rather than forbearing, although in His personal feelings there

* "Religion makes easy what in any case is necessary."—Wm. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 51.

can be no suspension of His yearning compassion, even towards those whose sins doom them to temporary or final retribution. God's majestic aversion to wickedness is the great mainstay of the moral universe, but it is entirely free from all trace of personal spitefulness.

The question to be answered, then, with regard to the "imprecatory" prayers of the Psalms is: "What was the particular kind of feeling which urged their utterance? Was it religious or entirely revengeful?" To our Western ears the words may sound like cries of spiteful revenge, if under sore provocation. But if, indeed, they were uttered in a public spirit, urged by a zeal for the honour of supreme law and order, then these prayers may not have been ungodly ones, in the sense that certain Babylonian curses, and Greek imprecations, preserved in our museums, seem to have been. The standard by which we must judge them is not, of course, the personal exhortations of the Sermon on the Mount, but our own *public* sense, as responsible citizens of States possessed of upright administrators. As they are Oriental prayers, there must be added the consideration that while we of the West, in presenting our case, do not need to beg and pray our judges to punish the criminal, all those under Oriental rule have always to do so, from either necessity or custom. Thus these

sinister prayers, with their Oriental colouring of appeal to the Judge Supreme, and their legal standard of retribution in kind (as in both the code of Hammurabi and the law of Moses), may be regarded, on the whole, as pleas for a retribution that is righteous, rather than for a revenge that is ungodly. It is thus that the Hebrews themselves have regarded them. In a word, as sacred appeals for prosecution.

iii. *Authoritative Benevolence.* The Hebrew Psalms, together with Moses and the prophets, ever affirm the authoritative benevolence as well as the justice of God. Towards this vast loving-kindness the psalmists direct their prayers and hopes, when oppressed with a sense of sin. And here it may seem open to the cynical reader of Scripture to make stock of the incongruity of the Hebrews praying to God the double prayer : " Deal with *them* after their evil deeds, but reward *us* not according to our offences." And were such a double prayer to have been offered in the same breath, it would undoubtedly be an instance of one of the many unconscious inconsistencies to which our common human nature is liable. But we note that, in the Psalms, all appeals for justice upon the oppressor are accompanied by the assumption of comparative right-doing before God and man. " I have done judgment and justice : Leave me not

to mine oppressors" is a specimen utterance (Ps. cxix. 121 : compare Ps. vii. 8 ; xviii. 17–24) ; and the penitential sections are separate and distinct from those containing such appeals. Comparing the two classes of prayers together, the one is virtually : "Be our righter and rescuer : vindicate Thy name for authoritative justice" ; and the other is : "Make and keep us right with Thee : vindicate Thy name for authoritative benevolence towards the sincerely penitent."

A plea for personal rights may be of uncertain religious quality ; but a craving for personal rightness toward Divine law and order is undoubtedly a religious sentiment. And this was the leading element in the outlook of the psalmists toward the Divine benevolence. With a vividly realised God as Heavenly Principle personified, there was in their conviction of moral failure, a distinct sense of sin against God ; and for this personal offence, or state of offensiveness, the penitent Hebrew felt an imperative need of Divine pardon—notably in Psalm li. Health seems to have been the chief boon craved by the Chaldean penitent ; abundant harvests seem to have been the highest gift of the non-moral God of the Greek poet Aratus ; but with health of body, and a full harvest store, there was in many a Hebrew soul a great hunger for assured forgiveness, for a renewal of the light of

the Divine countenance, for the reinstatement of communion with God. The craving for pardon was indeed a part of the suppliant's "thirst for God" Himself.*

When his penitence reached this stage, we read of a gracious response, recorded in the allegro of exuberant gratitude: "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquities I have not hid; I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (xxxii. 5). "I waited patiently for the Lord: and He inclined His ear unto me and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay; and He set my feet upon a rock and established my goings" (xli. 1–2); in connection with, "Burnt offering and *sin offering* hast Thou not required" (verse 6). "Thou Lord art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all that call upon Thee" (lxxxvi. 5). "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared. . . . With the Lord there is plenteous redemption, and He shall deliver Israel from all his

* Most happily paraphrased by Browning:

"And what is it that I hunger for—but God?
Oh God! my God! Let me for once look on Thee,
As though naught else existed—we alone!
And as Creation crumbles, my soul's spark
Expands, till I can say—even from myself,
I need Thee, and I feel Thee, and I love Thee!"

iniquities" (cxxx. 4, 7, 8). Thus, throughout the generations, from multiplied personal experience, there was perpetuated the *Name* of God given under Moses (Ex. xxxiv. 6–7): "The Lord, the Lord, a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" — the Name of Authoritative Benevolence, spelt in living syllables; yet never dissociated from the Name of Authoritative Justice: "that will by no means clear the guilty."

Such conclusions as these, deducible from the records of psalmists and prophets, have been called "Judaic postulates" or "dogmas," but the Hebrew soul-songsters knew as little of such chilling terms as an ancient athlete might know of anatomical terms, when he rejoiced to run his race. Theology there is here in its essentials, theology at its source, as a great river at its source; but while with us the stream of theology is apt to resemble a river flowing through a prosaic city, with rigid embankments on either side, with them it was a brook in its native heights, a living stream as yet unmapped, whereof the heat-worn drank and "lifted up his head." Hebrew theology is the theology of spontaneous experience.

"Thy statutes have become my songs,"—the

grammar was lost in heart-eloquence, the theology merged in the rapture of personal blessedness. The psalmists analysed the attributes of their God perhaps as little as a devoted lover would analyse his loved one's charms, when under their full spell; though he might unconsciously enumerate some of them.

> 'Tis not a lip, or eye, we beauty call,
> But the joint force and full result of all.*

They scarcely analysed; they realised instead. And from this lover-like realisation there arose many a personal love-name for the sacred Object of their devotion, such as "O Lord my strength, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my shield, my high tower" (xviii. 2 and 46); or "Thou that hearest prayer" in connection with the "purging of transgressions" (lxv. 2–3); or "Who forgiveth all mine iniquities; who healeth all my diseases; who redeemeth my life from destruction, and crowneth me with lovingkindness and tender mercies" (ciii. 3–4). It is ever from the condition of passionate intensity, of glowing realisation, of adoring gratitude, trying in vain to express the unspeakable, that we are to read these song-portions. And happy indeed are we if we have ourselves caught their inner experience!

* Pope.

Considered apart from the emotion which befits the case, the silent depths of joy, of which the songs of praise are sunlit waves,—both silence and song alike caught from the Divine Love itself (as in Zeph. iii. 17, marg.)—we may note that the Hebrews had learnt, from vivid assurance, one precious doctrine—that of Divine forgiveness receivable through penitent prayer. They were assured that in man's extremity, as a sin-conscious failure, there may be brought to the soul, in response to such prayer, a true reinstatement before the Eternal. If records of prayer for Divine pardon have hardly been found outside the Scriptures, except in some psalms of Chaldea, the fact of *realised pardon* is well-nigh peculiar to the religion which arose in old Judæa. But though discovered thus locally, the doctrine itself is of universal application, even as a local discovery in medicine to-day becomes a medical doctrine for every land.

Arising from the assurance of personal reinstatement before God, through contrite prayer, we find among the Hebrews a broader form of supplication —that of intercession for others. The priests themselves, and the ideal priestly "Servant of God" (in Isaiah liii.), "made intercession for the transgressors." But the gracious impulses of God were such that the priests never had a monopoly as spiritual intermediaries. The priestly channel

was kept intact, but the " flood-like grace " overflowed all its banks. Three prominent cases of non-priestly intercessors—cases typical, we imagine, of many whose names are unrecorded—appear before us in the persons of Moses (Exodus xxxii.), Samuel (1 Sam. vii. 5), and Daniel (Dan. ix.), who began statedly to apply the faculty of prayer to the wide human problem, as represented in their nation ; as indeed some of the psalmists did incidentally to the world at large (Ps. xxxiii. 8 ; lxvii. 2 ; lxxii. 19 ; cviii. 8). And this intercessory service, to which they were impelled from above and around, by the honour of God and the need for His rule, was impressed upon them as a duty, even as Samuel said : " God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you " (1 Sam. xii. 23).

Their philosophy of prayer may have been meagre. It was humanised into simple request and response, as of one who almost needed to be persuaded by pleadings ; as though they said, in the words of a modern novelist,* if with more assurance than that of one of his characters : " Perhaps my prayer can do something in heaven. Perhaps a prayer from me can make God wish to do something He had not wished to do before." Our own philosophy of prayer, in subsequent chapters,

* Robert Hichens.

may be much deeper than that; but we should give full value to this historic fact—the rise upon earth of deputy-intercessors with God, outside all priestly orders. For here is the rise of a new race, whose descendants were destined to be found throughout Christendom, attempting what these pioneers attempted, and achieving what they achieved on a yet grander scale. Whatever temporary and local elements there were in the old Hebrew priesthood, there have been none in the lay-office of intercessory deputyship to which simple godliness did once urge, and does still urge, the faithful. For if it was ever true, it must still be true, that "the righteous and gracious One is nigh unto all that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth" (Ps. cxlv. 17–18), and none the less so when their prayer is of a fully altruistic character—the outcome, indeed, of Divinely induced benevolence.

II. *Power to help the praying soul.*—We have noticed, all too meagrely, the Hebrew belief in the forgiveness of sins, when sought of God with truly penitent prayer. And to this we find added, in the simple *credo* of the devout Hebrew, the assurance of God's communicable moral power being received into the soul, in response to further supplication. It is a pathetic fact that this also is almost peculiar to the Old Testament, among all

the pre-Christian books of the world. But in the Old Testament it is a prominent item, based on reiterated experience, and, thus established, a doctrine of timeless importance for mankind at large.

First, we find prayers for moral strength, and victory over soul-besetments, specimen prayers, doubtless, of a vast number that are unreported. "Clear Thou me from hidden faults. Keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me.* Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer" (Ps. xix. 12–14). "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (cxxxix. 23–24). "My soul cleaveth unto the dust; quicken me according to Thy word" (cxix. 25). "My soul melteth for heaviness; strengthen me according to Thy word" (28). "I will run in the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart" (32). "Let my heart be perfect in Thy statutes, that I may not be ashamed" (80). "Quicken me after Thy lovingkindness, so shall I observe the testimony of Thy mouth" (88).

* A distinct recognition of the dynamic power of evil, as in other passages to be quoted.

"Order my footsteps in Thy word; and let not any iniquity have dominion over me" (133). "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant, for I do not forget Thy commandments" (176).

Then, the response to such prayers. "He restoreth my soul, He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake" (Ps. xxiii. 3). "He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities" (Micah vii. 19). "Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy name. In the day that I called, Thou answeredst me. Thou didst encourage me with strength in my soul" (Ps. cxxxviii. 3). "The Lord will give strength unto His people" (xxix. 11). "He will answer . . . from His holy heaven, with the saving strength of His right hand" (xx. 6). "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength"—as soaring eagles, and unwearied couriers, and unfainting travellers (Isaiah xl. 31). In the words of Daniel, the man of prayer: "The people that know their God shall be strong and achieve" (Dan. xi. 33). For "calling upon the Lord" is defined by Isaiah (lxiv. 7) as "stirring up oneself to take hold of God."

The utterances we have been considering are ancient ones, but the discoveries they embody are

of commanding importance for men of the modern world. When read and pondered over, they appeal to the human heart everywhere as eminently normal; when made a matter of personal quest they appeal to the consciousness as profoundly real. And if, as it is often urged: "These are days when the Bible is placed in the context of other religious literature, and our views upon it are considerably modified," then two things may still be safely affirmed of these venerable Scriptures. First, in a truly wondrous manner, they have a way of interpreting themselves in the terms of the new thought of each generation; and secondly, they suffer nought, but shine the brighter, by a fair comparison with the old thought, on things sacred, which was contemporaneous with them. In the words of Max Müller *: "Many are the advantages to be derived from a careful study of other religions, but the greatest of all is that it teaches us to appreciate more truly what we possess in our own."

Of other works, known to us to have been extant when the books of the Old Testament were completed (say 300 B.C. at the latest), the world possessed, in the order of interest to the modern reader: (1) The Iliad and Odyssey; (2) the History of Herodotus; (3) the Chinese *Canon of*

* *Chips from a German Workshop.*

History, and the historical work called the *Tso Chuen*; (4) the *Book of Odes* and other Chinese classics, including the sayings of Confucius and Mencius; (5) the works of the earlier Greek philosophers; (6) the works of the Persian Zoroaster; (7) sections and fragments of early Chaldean and Egyptian literature; (8) the Aryan hymns of India, though not then committed to writing; (9) some Pali texts of Buddhism *; (10) the Code of Manu, and traditional tenets of the Brahmins concerning the all-comprising Soul of the universe, probably not then committed to writing.

Let the religious portions of these ancient works be read and studied side by side with the Old Testament, and it will become apparent that their points of excellency occur (among much that is of inferior quality) when they most approach to the general standard of the Old Testament †; and

* These were completed at a somewhat uncertain date, and consist of (*a*) the *Suttapitakam*, book of dialogues; (*b*) the *Vinayapitakam*, book of discipline; (*c*) the *Abidammapitakam*, book of theology. The reputed sayings of Gautama have not been found in the extensive translations made into Chinese, 67 A.D., onwards, and may possibly have been put into writing at a later date.

† As in the classical passages already quoted from the ancient religion of China; such passages as Zoroaster's declaration: "There is only one God, and no other is to be compared to Him"; or the Chaldean hymn to the supreme divinity of Ur: "Father, long-suffering and full of forgiveness, whose hand upholds the life of all mankind; Lord, thy divinity, like the far-off heaven, fills the wide sea with fear. . . . Firstborn, omnipotent, whose

further, the heart-convincing passages of the latter shine forth by comparison, with quite a new lustre. Let us give the fullest possible value to all broken lights found here and there outside the Jewish Scriptures, let us rejoice to recognise those gleams as of Heaven ; and then, when the wearied traveller toward the Great Norma lies down to rest, like a homeless traveller of old, he sees in these Scriptures, as that one saw in his dreams, a veritable stair-way of solid rock-ledges, from the place of his lying down to the throne of the Eternal ; upon which stair-way there shine forth radiant utterances, like so many angels, beckoning him upwards to his true dwelling-place in all generations, to an abiding home in the heart of his God.

These Scripture utterances our godly fathers were accustomed to call " inspired." And if our great poets and dramatists, casting their brain-work and soul-work into the world's treasury, have done so from a greatening of personality to which we apply the word " inspiration," there is

heart is immensity. . . . Lord, the ordainer of the laws of heaven and earth, whose command may not be broken . . ." ; the Egyptian : " God is the Father of fathers, and Mother of mothers. God is the creator of heaven and earth. . . . God is compassionate to them that fear him, and hears those that cry unto him. He protects the weak against the strong. He rewards them that serve him, and succours them that follow him " ; or the ancient Sanscrit : " Then there was neither death nor immortality, there was neither day nor night, nor light nor darkness. Only the existent One breathed calmly, self-contained."

in so many of these Hebrew utterances a character and quality which appeals to us as undoubtedly "God-breathed." They contain revealings from the heavenlies as well as aspirations from the earth-plane. "Stirring up themselves to take hold of God," these writers were themselves taken hold of by God, to the exaltation of all spiritual insight—piercing the veil of things unseen, and disclosing what were to them, and what are essentially, realities as sure as any that are commonly tangible.

They saw, not merely surmised, that high above all reigns the Lord of Hosts, secure in His heavenly authority and power, the great Unsearchable, whose home on earth is yet with the contrite ones. They saw that His authority is Justice enthroned, awaiting its time, or issuing its fiat; and enthroned Benevolence too—a tender heart of compassion that is over all His works, and never beyond the reach of the sin-tired soul. They saw that His communicable might is mightier than all the leagued forces of evil—the dominion of iniquity—around and within the springs of human character.

No modern developments of philosophy or culture, nor any recent acquaintance with non-Judæan religions, have in any wise discredited the fact of, or the need for, this moral authority of the Supreme, in its breadth of justice and its plenitude

of mercy. And happily this truth is held as an axiom in the creed of universal Christendom. Latin, Greek, and Reformed Churches alike regard it as fundamental, whatever sacerdotal conditions may be quoted, in two of these Churches, concerning the dispensing of the Divine mercy to penitent suppliants. And the remaining tenet, God's power to strengthen the praying soul, is far from denied by any one section of the Church at large. But surely this same experimental truth—of the moral power of God, receivable through prayer, of the Divine adequacy coming thus into the soul to supply all human incompetency, so that the *I ought* of conscience may actually become the *I can* of character and conduct—needs in our day an altogether new emphasis, in order to foster throughout all Christian communities such habits of earnest prayerfulness as this doctrine suggests and demands.

Even before we study the fuller Gospel of the New Testament, we may be sure that this important element in the rudimentary Gospel of the Hebrew Bible is developed rather than discarded by Jesus and His apostles. For it is indeed the chief element that gives full dynamic efficacy to the whole. And, if that be so, must we not conclude that the Reformation may still need to be carried to its rightful and logical issue?

The re-discovery of the Scriptures, with their

directly accessible God, was followed, in the sixteenth century, by a great Protest—an appeal to Christ in the court of heaven—against the mediæval priestcraft which had grasped at the absolute authority of God, and His rulership of the human conscience. That priestcraft of the Dark Ages had exalted itself into the worshipper's one link with the Divine, and its own ceremonies into his one means of efficient grace; thus localising the Omnipresent One more rigidly than in the localised religion of degenerate Samaria, for the mountain-spot near Sychar was always freely available, as a priestly sacrament might not have been. The Reformation of the sixteenth century was therefore a needed Protest on behalf of the unlocalised authority and goodness of the Spiritual God who everywhere, and at all times, yearneth for spiritual worshippers.

This great Protest was followed by a great emancipation of thought, a truly magnificent expansion of mind, in other than purely religious matters. The various sciences were born which, in the end, have taught men to grasp and apply to their needs so much of the great physical Nature-Force. And so great have been the boons to humanity, brought by the travail of the Reformers, that it would seem ungracious to suggest any incompleteness in the work of many of their successors. But, over against

all physical forces, there is the moral Nature-Force of God Himself—man's destined aid towards a powerful ideality of manliness, and freely available for all that "stir up themselves to lay hold of God." The full Reformation should thus have been a rebound from an unwarranted grasping at the absolute authority of God, on the part of the few, *in favour of a direct grasp of the moral power of God on the part of the many.*

This prayerful grasp of the power of God was entirely omitted in the moral system of Confucius, and in those of most ancient and modern philosophers, who proclaim the *ought* of conscience without the effective *how*. It must never be omitted, but ever made emphatic, in any system that names the name of Christ. For *Christianity includes, as one of its most essential features, daily habits of strenuous prayerfulness.*

Our Christian religion, if it is to be a true potency in our life and influence, must indeed embody—if with a higher objective—such habitual prayerfulness as that enjoined in one of the earliest fragments from old Chaldea: "Pray! Pray! Pray on the couch! Pray at the dish! Pray at the kindling of the fire! Pray when it is aglow. . . . Pray at the sunrise, pray at its setting! Pray when thou comest out of the city! Pray when thou goest into the city! Pray when thou enterest

into the house! Pray in the street! Pray on the road!" *

It was in the constant recognition of the ever-present One that the godly of old time walked with their God amid earthly affairs, gaining within themselves, from His omnipresence, some hints of His omnipotence also; gaining indeed a strength and grandeur of adequacy from an ever-adequate God —that special element of adequacy for all moral circumstances which our modern Christianity so often fails to exhibit.

But may we not make bold to quote, in this connection, some words of Milton? In his *Areopagitica* he says: "By all concurrence of signs, and by the general instinct of holy and devout men, God is decreeing to begin some new and great period in his Church, even to the reforming of Reformation itself."

* Thus, Sir Thomas Browne says: "I have resolved to pray more and to pray always, to pray in all places where quietness inviteth, in the house, on the highway, and on the street; and to know no street or passage in this city that may not witness that I have not forgotten God."

THE FULL-ORBED GOSPEL

"Governments and philosophies of morals have their remedies for the ills of life and society. Be our part and lot with those who rivet their faith upon that one scheme of human amelioration which is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone."—W. E. GLADSTONE, *Gleanings of Past Years*, vol. v.

IV

THE FULL-ORBED GOSPEL

"SUDDENLY the gladsome light leaped over hill and valley, casting amber, blue, and purple, and a tint of rich red, according to the scene they lit upon, and the curtain flung around; yet all alike dispelling fear and the cloven hoof of darkness, all on the wings of hope advancing, and proclaiming, 'God is here.' Then life and joy sprang reassured from every crouching hollow; every flower and bud and bird had a fluttering sense of them; and all the flashing of God's gaze merged into soft beneficence."

It is thus a modern artist in words describes the sunrise in a beautiful country part. And although to most dwellers in our prosaic cities, with their semi-nocturnal habits, nothing could be less inspiring than the mere return of daylight, yet to those in our villages who, for any reason, "watch for the morning," the dawn of day can never be quite free from some touch of elemental romance. But even then, to understand the Oriental use of

the metaphor of dawn,* we have to remember that it grew up under primitive conditions, in lawless ages, where travellers like Jacob might find themselves benighted outside closed city-gates, or exposed to manifold dangers, away from any sheltering habitation, so that *the dawn* full often meant relief, not only from bewildered homelessness, but also from actual peril.

The "sure word of prophecy" is likened to "a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn"; and the general attitude of those Hebrew prophets was that of watchers for the sunrise. Their written utterances portray much that is murky and confused, much "gloom of anguish," at times with "terror on every side"; but their souls were possessed by passionate hopes of a brighter renewal. Trusting in the living God, enthroned on high above all sombre conditions, their hopes invested the horizon with early rays of a sacred dawn,

> Where light, and life, and joy, and peace,
> In undivided empire reign.

The last of the Old Testament prophets, while holding firmly to the "good tidings" of God's present sovereignty in the heavens, beyond all

* Where *dawn* practically means *sunrise*, for there is little twilight.

visible circumstance, was especially on the outlook for an approaching manifestation of His dominion upon earth. Amid the prevailing gloom of casuistic irreverence, his heart was lit with the prospect of a new day of the Lord. In one aspect it was to be a morning of authoritative judgment upon ungodliness and wrong, but to all God-seekers a dawning of authoritative mercy—the rising of the "sun of righteousness," * compared with which the whole past of sacred out-shinings would seem as the gleams of early twilight.

And within us of modern times, however rudimentary our theological insight, there awakens each Christmastide an instinctive conviction that we have witnessed the new morn of Divine grace which the prophets looked for; a conviction that we are in no wise the dupes of a Galilean conspiracy, to paint a sunrise that never happened; a cunningly devised fable, in which a mere peasant-philosopher is enhaloed with dawn-rays born of perfervid imaginings; but that, from the self-consciousness of Jesus, and the records of His life and death, and what followed, together with the permanent influence of the whole, there is to be gained the assurance that, to an almost unthinkable and quite unfathomable degree, there has verily risen upon the world an ever-new Gospel

* Or blessedness, as in Psalm xxiv. 5.

for humanity, and a message of gladness for all in realised need of God.

Not that the Old Testament was Gospel-less. In its God-story were good tidings indeed. The light-rays of earliest dawn are as truly sun-rays as those which stream direct from the risen sun. And to know God, as the Hebrew psalmists knew Him, would be an advance, rather than a retrogression, in many a Christian's life.

"That awful Being could never be put away from them. He was about their path, and about their feet, and knew all their thoughts long before. Yet this tremendous enclosing Presence was a Presence of love. It was a manifold everlasting manifestation of one deep feeling—a desire for human affection. And such a Being, never absent, but standing beside the life of each man with an ever-watchful tenderness; and recognised, though invisible, in every blessing that befell them from youth to age, became naturally the Object of their warmest affections. Their belief in Him could not exist without producing, as a necessary effect, that profound expression of personal attachment which, in the Hebrew authors, always mingled with and vivified their faith in the Invisible." *

Let their realisations of the Most High, never ceasing to be Himself, yet to the lowly heart be-

* Arthur Hallam, *Remains*, p. 275.

coming the Most Nigh ; the infinite Majesty becoming an omnipresent Heart, wooing the soul to an intimacy of adoration ;—let such realisations of the Divine be compared with some of our own Christian realisations, with some of our average thoughts of God, and we begin to make these men our sacred school-masters, with inward resolves to gain their secret, the " whispered secret of the Lord," by a more prayerful meditation than has been our wont.

Let their realisations of the Divine be compared with Confucius' unfocussed cognisance of Heaven, with Lao Tzŭ's unformulated perception of Nature-Force, with the Brahmin conception of the Infinite All, or Buddha's ideal of Infinite Vacuity, and although these various conceptions may fit in with racial consciousness in various conditions of development, and perhaps with our own incipient realisations at various transitional stages of the religious sense,* the comparison will cause the sacred winsomeness of these Hebrew realisations to become the more apparent. There is, in these old-world Scriptures, so much of a definite response—

* "Theologians hold that men are either Christians, Fetish worshippers, Buddhists, Mohammedans, Confucianists, etc., but the psychology of religion shows that the individual who has a full and normal development is essentially several or even all of them in turn, or even at one and the same time."—Jean Da Buy, quoted by C. Stanley Hall, Ph.D., LL.D., *Adolescence*, vol. ii. p. 50.

readily assuming the form of a personal message—to the human heart everywhere, in its times of need, and its seasons of aspiration. In whatever land these Scriptures are translated, certain portions of them appeal to the reader as a reminder of something never quite forgotten, rather than as a revelation of something entirely new. They furnish the other half of the tally (to use a Far Eastern metaphor) of which one half has ever been stored in the subconscious soul. And, in this sense, these writings become self-accrediting.

To thoughtful readers of diverse races, the awful stalwartness of God, as depicted in the Old Testament, is never without its appeal to the consciousness of what should be. Shall there be a Supreme at all, and not an authoritative One? an ultimate Sovereign of the universe, and not a mighty One? Are there not awe-compelling forces in the heavens and the earth which, at times, scorn all man's utmost precautions? And is there not Someone, enthroned beyond all these forces, who is strong enough to laugh in His unconquerable might at all the plottings of wickedness? Surely there is Authority regnant in the skies, and Right enthroned there too—the sovereign Ought-to-be, towards which the conscience points so persistently; but Mercy and Helpfulness also, did men but know how to gain access to them! Are parents loving to

their little ones, and prone to respond to the child-cry " Do help me ! " and is there no Benevolence higher than ours as parents ? Are we fathers and mothers, forsooth, the beings of utmost sympathy in the universe ? Is there not a Heart of loftier, deeper compassion, somewhere in the unfathomed invisible ?

Such are the thoughts awakened in many minds on a first reading of portions of the Old Testament. And on further study there is found depicted Sovereign Love pleading for and demanding human love in return—for only love can long for love. " Thou shalt love Me with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might " (Deut. vi. 5). And just as all visible things are instinct with Nature-Force, so the unseen realm is permeated with a forceful God-sympathy, which says : " He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of Mine eye " (Zech. ii. 8). Of this omnipresent Sympathy too, it is related that " In all their affliction He was afflicted, the angel of His presence saved them ; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them, and He bare them, and carried them all the days " (Is. lxiii. 9). And further, there is sketched forth a mysterious Sharer, called the " servant of the Lord," but apparently His Deputy, in a certain heart-moving chapter of Isaiah. The total impression produced, if the pagan reader has

any soul at all, is: "This is what I need, though I cannot understand it entirely. What I do understand seems true and real. Let me get more such books, if there be others, so as to know more about this one." And this desire for more than the Old Testament is in full accord with the spirit of that collection of books.

The tone of the Old Testament throughout is that of a prolonged Introduction. Its whole outlook is anticipatory. Its luminous utterances seem to ask to be confirmed and focussed, as the early dawn-rays seem to demand the sunrise, to satisfy the expectancy. Its priestly sacrifices also, long since discontinued among the devoutest Jews, were evidently the husks of a great seed-principle; necessary to protect the incipient truth, which, in its full fruition, is to be prized as man's utmost treasure. And as the early twilight and the early springtide are poetically one, a Hebrew psalmist makes bold to combine both metaphors of the dawn and of the sprouting seed, in the words: "Light is sown for the righteous," including in that word all who long to be right with God. What then has been that great outcome of it all?

God near, but outside, humanity is the Gospel of the Old Testament. *God in the midst of humanity* is the Glad Tidings of the New Testament. God manifest in the person of one special Son of hu-

manity is the first note in those Tidings ; and it is followed by : God manifest in those associated with that One, investing each prayerful spirit with an immanent Life-Force. *The New Testament Gospel has grown around the person of a Divine Deputy, and the power of His Divine Spirit.** The former is connected with a mystic blending of Authoritative Justice and Authoritative Benevolence ; the latter with the actuality of Divine Helpfulness through prayer and supplication. And thus the great seed principles of the Old Testament are brought to a large and worthy fruition.

Let us consider these things in detail for a while ; ever remembering that, if they be realities, as so many generations of the faithful have been inwardly assured, then they are realities of a preciousness beyond the highest suggestiveness of the poet in forms and colours, or in rhythmic words and notes. And just as poems and paintings and music demand special faculties in the reader or looker or listener before they will surrender to him their charmed secret, so these spiritual verities may demand some special faculty in those who would perceive and grasp the inwardness of the whole. Yet, happily, the required faculty is not—

* If the word *Gospel* is applied most generally to the story of Jesus Christ, the term *New Testament*, the covenant of inner impulses (Jer. xxxi. 33-34), always involves the indwelling of the Spirit of God-in-Christ.

like an ear for *poetry* as distinct from rhymed verse, or an eye for *art* as distinct from a passable grouping of masses and tints—beyond the reach of all but a few; and not, like an ear for true music, the possession of but half of civilised mankind; but lies in what is basal to unwarped humanity—the simple child-heart, to which Love makes a difference, perchance all the difference.

The primary appeal of the Gospel is ever thus, for child-heartedness is the true condition of insight and receptiveness toward all things healthfully winsome. Yet also, when human nature is consciously warped and baffled, the very loss of all blossom and promise of life, the very weariness and hopelessness of things, forms a receptive condition through which many may come to yearn for a home in the heart of their God. The poor in spirit, at the point of dire extremity—"soul-beggars" for all that Christ can give, and most of all for His realised presence; the heavily laden ones who are tired with the distressful controversy with conscience and God; and those who are oppressed by the tyranny of some evil besetment, when other help there is none;—all such may know the appealing solace of God's own Good News, and through reliance on Christ, and prayer for His Spirit, may grasp its inner priceIessness, the peace that passeth all understanding

and the power of an inwrought adequacy; and gaining these, may bless for ever the Redeemer who has made all this salvation possible for them.

I. Of the Divine Deputy and Sharer with humanity, no one who realises much but must fall back upon such words as: "He whom I feel, but lack the power to paint." * Those who have any heart-sufficing vision of the Dawn of Salvation might as well essay to pencil forth the sunrise itself as to try to describe to others the Redeeming Christ,

> Whose glowing graces far out-blush the morn.

But for want of a yet worthier description of His personality let us start with the utterance of a young-eyed soul,† while yet in the dew of life's morning. He says: "There exists in the doctrine of the Cross a peculiar and inexhaustible treasure for the affectionate feelings. The idea of the Θεανθροπος, the God whose goings have been from everlasting, made visible to men for their redemption, as living, acting, and suffering among themselves, then transferring to the unseen place of His invisible agency the same humanity He wore on earth, so that the lapse of generations can in no wise affect the conception of His identity; this is the most powerful thought that has ever addressed

* Juvenal, *Sat.* iii. line 56.

† Arthur Hallam, already quoted.

itself to a human imagination. . . . All the other bonds that fastened down the Spirit of the Universe to our narrow round of earth were as nothing to this golden chain of suffering and self-sacrifice, which riveted the heart of man to One who, like himself, was acquainted with grief. Pain is the deepest thing we have in our nature, and union through pain has always seemed more holy and more real than any other."

On such a theme as this it is manifestly difficult to set down a short paragraph which shall be at once a graphic statement, and satisfying to every reader. Some few may object to the " dogmatic theology " which makes Jesus to be God incarnate in any absolute sense; although they will admit that, from the early Church onwards, this has been the prevailing belief of Christendom. Others, on the orthodox side, may object that only in the one word " redemption " is there a hint of an atonement for sin, and that the statement is thus not dogmatic enough; although they will admit that this same word " redemption," if rightly interpreted, may cover that half of the whole case.

Without surrendering any personal convictions as to the identity of Jesus with the pre-existent Son of God, we may write down that the Eternal, having spoken to men through the God-consciousness of some merely human deputies, did, through One

whom we may call His Divine Deputy, manifest His own royal sympathy, to the point of sharing with humanity, in its sorrows and woes. Also, if the New Testament means anything, we gather that, in some way that may not be so obvious to us, the Cross of Christ was the destined climax of a long line of sin-offerings (so characteristic of the God-worship of early China, and of ancient Judæa), and, for this reason, the Sufferer thereon was appropriately called: "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

We are taught in the New Testament, and may firmly believe, that He who has been the Divine Deputy, and on the other hand the Human Sharer and Sin-bearer, lived a life of voluntary service, and died a death of voluntary sacrifice, both to redeem mankind, and to consummate the balance between Authoritative Justice and Authoritative Benevolence. To explain, with rigid mathematical precision, how all this was achieved on the Cross, is quite another thing. A Divine enterprise such as this may well defy our utmost powers of analysis. We know in part, and can but declare in part. It is only the "laws" of the physical world that can be described at all in mathematical formulæ, and then but in part. The vast Nature-Law in its grand totality everywhere surpasses the limits of our understanding. And we mortals, sinners every

one, know little from any absolute standpoint of the seriousness of sin—that abnormal clash with the eternally Normal, that selfish assault on eternal Authority, for which amends must needs be made to the eternal principles which that Divine Authority embodies.

From our partisan view of the case we may not see why "Confess and be forgiven, repent and be acquitted" should not be the simple rule in the universe at large as it is in any friendly community approaching a family-circle, especially as the Sermon on the Mount describes humanity as the wide family-circle of the benevolent Father on high, and represents God-likeness as a spirit of non-retaliation. But, in that same Sermon on the Mount we are confronted with the authoritative decision that *all sins are crimes* (even such minor sins as anger, contempt, and abuse), and subject to legal retribution, within the realm of God. And this opens up a new horizon.

It may be exceedingly difficult for us moderns to transport ourselves back to the standpoint of sacrificial propitiations in the old world, where the basal idea, in the worshipper's mind, seems mostly the appeasing of personal resentment in an offended being, whether that being were a mere pestilence demon, or a minor spirit of uncertain temper, or a more august civic guardian, or the Supreme

Himself. And actually, as well as metaphorically, to base a massive doctrine upon the old idea of sacrificial propitiation, even in its most clarified instances, may require a greater mental effort—if vivid realisation is to be gained—than many can readily give. To the Jew, such words as *sin-offering* and *propitiation* would appeal with exceeding forcefulness, but to us, only in a secondary and modified degree; and thus in many a sincere mind there may be, spite of all output of sacred imaginings, a measure of aloofness from that once-appealing aspect of the Atonement of Christ.

But, is it not something more than a mere coincidence that, in the days of Jesus, and at a time when the old series of priestly sacrifices were on the wane in several regions, there had arisen throughout the Western world the great empire of Rome, to educate men everywhere in the majesty of *law and order*, as civic and imperial entities of commanding importance? In place of the old conceptions of amends due to offended deities, there arose the new conception of *amends due to law and order*, for any violation of either. From this we have gained our modern civic standpoint, and with it some new possibilities of insight into the great necessity for the Cross of Christ, as eternal Law and Order become dominant entities to us. No civic government, as we know,

can possibly be established on the lines of "Confess and be forgiven, repent and be acquitted," and the constitution of the abiding City of God can hardly be framed on these lines.

Two related problems are quoted in the Old Testament: the first, in the book of Job, where a good man receives far less good than he deserves; the second, in Psalm lxxiii., where the evil man receives far more good than he deserves. But how is it that millions of Scripture-readers, oppressed in mind whenever either of these "mysteries" come home to them in actual life, have yet seen no "mystery" at all in such a statement as that of Psalm ciii. 10? For there it is written: "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us after our iniquities."

Let the third personal pronoun be substituted for the first personal pronoun, and the case assumes its true aspect. Let a serious offence be committed against ourselves as well as against the community at large, and after the arrest and conviction of the criminal, let the civic magistrate fail to deal with *him* after *his* sins, or reward *him* after *his* iniquities. Then, though the law-breaker himself might extol the judge for his clemency, we certainly should not. Nor would our fellow-citizens praise the judge when they heard of it. The press and the public opinion of the whole realm would

cry out, in no measured tones, that a great civic principle had been shelved and outraged. What magistrate on earth has any right, forsooth, to be generous and forbearing in defiance of law and order, even though the criminal protested that he was sorry, and would never commit another crime? And has the Magistrate Supreme, *as such*, any warrant to be forbearing to law-breakers? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do *right*, whatever His benevolent feelings, personally?

Confucius, as ex-magistrate and State-minister of Justice, held that sin against Heaven could no more be annihilated by prayer than crime against the laws of the land by the criminals praying in court for pardon. His dictum was: "He who offends against Heaven has no place of prayer." * And were he to have read Psalm ciii. 10, he would have been inclined to argue that the so-called sins and iniquities must have been of a venial order, if High Heaven let them pass unnoticed. For ever in the ancient classics of China, the Sovereign Supreme is represented as the exact rewarder of good and the exact punisher of evil—thus making Him to be the Supreme Magistrate. Certainly, intercession against calamity (as punishment of sin against Heaven) was offered by the Priest-

* Compare, in its context: "If a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him?" (1 Sam. ii. 25).

Chieftain, or Priest-King, in connection with a sin-offering, and with a sacrificial formula already quoted (in a footnote, p. 55), where he pleads to bear the sin of the people, *in his own person.* And in this connection, Shun Yueh (a statesman at Court, 148–209 A.D.) wrote: "The sacred king abases himself to exalt (*i.e.* enhance) the joy of the world (*lit.* all beneath the skies)." Hence Confucius would urge that, if indeed the sins and iniquities were real offences against Heaven, and the implied pardon real also, some Royal-Priestly substitution of great moral value should have been effected, to meet the claims of Heavenly Principle, and so gain a reversal of the evil retribution that was necessarily due. And would not his contention be a right one?

Yet again we say—and especially as the New Testament is silent on the matter—that in what precise way the sin-bearing of Christ, as the great Human Sharer, adjusted the balance between Authoritative Justice and Authoritative Benevolence, may lie beyond the grasp of our finite minds. It may need heaven itself to explain the heavenly Atonement. But this much we can perceive, that some great act of reparation, on behalf of humanity, was needed in order that absolute Justice could become absolute and authoritative Benevolence also, toward penitent offenders.

Through the boundless love of the Eternal, that which was needed has been all done for us by His own Deputy, as Son of humanity; and the majestic grace involved, when it fully absorbs the contrite heart, may do much to solve the world-wide problem of a later Confucian thinker—*the blending of human passion with heavenly principle*, by affording a new centre for the chief outflow of desire, will, passion.

Even this has been achieved, from the days of the early Christian martyrs, with whom loyalty to the claims of the Highest was cherished more fondly than life itself, to the days of devoted ministries to the sick and suffering, and the rise of the red cross on the field of battle, where fatigue and danger are forgotten, as well as all distinctions between friend and foe, in a passion of sacred, yet almost unconscious, altruism. And in numberless cases during the intervening ages, where a vision of the Divine Self-emptying has possessed the soul, there has welled up a new passion for personal rightness, and the righting of wrongs in the world; or a passion of realest benevolence in place of the old grasping selfishness.

The record is a long and a glorious one. It is reflected in the sacred art of the centuries, and embodied in the transfigured lives which have begemmed the centuries. And in milder form it is

expressed in each Christian home-circle—so different in all but name from the old Roman *familia*—in families where the wishes of others receive the readiest deference, and where "like sheltered flowers, spring up all that is purest and sweetest in human lives"—the true seed-plots of prosperous States. It is indeed stamped on whole civilisations, where culture is now deemed incomplete apart from purity, courtesy, and kindliness. True, that in the Dark Ages of priestcraft, or under the baneful spell of that narrow-mindedness which is intellectual ungodliness, much was done in the name of the Cross and the Christ—done quite savagely and unfeelingly, to discredit the fair name of both. But, in so many ways, which would need a volume to describe, and which, happily, have been too manifest to need any enumeration, the old impact of heavenly principle from without, against which the self-indulgent strove, has become a constraining force from within, wherever the Cross of Christ has been a vivid personal realisation.

The full-orbed Gospel, as regards the absolving Cross, may have many aspects yet to be explored, but, simply stated, it is the Glad Tidings—glad to usward, but awesomely pathetic—of a Tragedy which stands as a great remedial fact, over against the tragedy of human iniquity; a Tragedy in

which a Divine Deputy gave Himself, not only to share the woes of our mortal life, but to "bear our sins in His own body." And it is upon this last phrase that we may ponder illimitably.

Let us consider that, for wickedness of any kind, and for calamity of any kind, all the older languages of the world, and most of the modern ones, contain just one and the same term—answering to our word *evil*. Indeed it is difficult all at once to tell, in an ancient passage or two, whether moral or physical evil is intended.* An incidental testimony, this, to the fact that, from the observation of mankind, moral discord has always a tendency to translate itself into its mental and physical equivalents—into pain and woe—for some one or other, and surely for the evil-doer himself eventually. Wherever there is a violation of heavenly principle in any of the relations of life, some one connected with the offender is sure to be made a sufferer. In the New Testament phrase, sin has always to be "borne in the body" of some one or other.

Most adults, and not a few children, are "bearing

* As in Isaiah xlv. 7, where God is called the "creator of evil." But here, the context shows that the "evil" is clearly calamity, the antithesis being "peace." The teaching is that, in the Providential order of the world, calamity follows in the wake of moral evil.

in their bodies " some stress and strain as the result of the sins of others. From the ragged little ones, living their half-buried lives in our city slums, to front-rank leaders of public opinion, many indeed are grievously hampered, in mind, body, or estate, from this cause. To the offender himself, the sin or course of sin was a freedom from duty's restrictions—a pleasing outlet for ungoverned instincts; but to these it has become a great embarrassment. Unfatherly fathers or unmotherly mothers, unprincipled sons or wilful daughters, unfeeling husbands or thoughtless wives, inconstant friends, unjust masters or dishonest employees, mischief-makers and ill-tempered folk generally, have laid upon others a great incubus of suffering. It has been unwillingly endured, it has fallen upon its victims unawares, but there it is, borne in their bodies—in many cases a load to be carried down to the grave.

Some noble souls, best known to the angels, have indeed gone beyond all ordinary relation-fulfilling, for they have voluntarily shouldered the sins of other lives. They have taken to their hearts moral tragedies, as though they were their own. And this they have done with no parade or show. When found out by a few, it has been by accident. For they have guarded their secret as men would guard hidden treasure. Nay, they have almost

kept their secret from themselves. Their left hand has hardly known what their right hand has suffered. Much inner life-force has been spent in this sharing with others, but surely found again in a transfigured character. Theirs is the crowned life already—not one to be crowned by-and-by. And, were it all known abroad and realised, as it will be one day, thousands might envy them their grandeur. For they have learnt their nobility from none other than the Master they follow—the Divine Sharer Himself.

But, forgetting even these noble ones, let us expand our sacred imaginings, in essaying to comprehend the nobility of the Noblest—the Hero of the Ages—who chose of Himself to bear in His body the sin of the world.

Some evil deeds wound us, but the great mass of human iniquity hardly impresses the mind. Familiarity has blunted our senses. "The element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind, and perhaps our frames could hardly bear much of it." * Both heart and brain would fail under the crushing realisation. But He, the sinless One, was fully sensitive to the horror and shame of all sin against God. It stabbed His soul to witness it. And yet He chose

* George Eliot, *Middlemarch*.

to make it all His own burden, for us and for all men!

Then, surely, the visible crucifixion meant but the lesser half of his pain. And, surely also, that unknown agony of His—the pain of the world's sin itself—was borne so that out of the bearing might flow great harmonising forces—upwards to the region of Heavenly Principle, and downwards into the lives of all who would receive them. He suffered on the cross in order that Justice and Benevolence, as well as the sinner and his God, might be "attuned to happy unison." The former of these results we may but partially understand; the latter is vividly manifest: "He bore our sins in His own body that we, being dead unto sins, might live unto righteousness."

We are all dead to some sins. Any enticement to murder or theft, to adultery, or to malicious lying would surely be a voice speaking as though to dead men. There would have to be a distinct resurrection of a baser nature than the ordinary, for such temptations to become temptations at all to us. The grosser sins prohibited in the Ten Commandments mark a low type of humanity, out of which we deem it the task of civilisation itself to evolve something higher. They seem connected with physical and mental disorganisation. They are outbreaks of malady which call for the

schoolmaster and doctor and civic inspector,* as well as the moral reformer. And Christ bore in His body these grosser sins of the world ; literally, in the case of two of them, as being the victim of slander and murder.

But for respectably civilised humanity, it is the sins that are regarded as quite compatible with utmost respectability which have nowadays to be exposed and crushed by the power of the Cross. Malice, the seed of murder—yes, and all uncharity ; covetousness, the seed of theft—yes, and all envy ; lust, the seed of adultery—yes, and all un-Christian longings ; untruthfulness and mischief-making—yes, and all careless exaggeration ; all these become loathsome in view of the Cross. But commonly, among us all, three sins against the kingdom of God need to be exposed and branded as such : our self-importance, which bends not to God's high Rulership ; our lukewarmness, which will not be fired by His glowing Benevolence ; our arrant laziness, which neglects to pray into our own lives the Power that would make us stalwarts for God, or to pray into other lives the Power that

* "Vile fancies and sensual appetites grow stronger and more terrible when a feeble physique and low vitality offer no opposing force. Deadly vices are nourished in weak diseased bodies that are penned, day after day, in filthy crowded tenements of great cities."—Kate Douglas Wiggin, *Children's Rights*.

would lift them Godward. Self-centredness, indifference, prayerlessness—in the realm of Divine Authority, Goodness, and Power—are three mischievous besetments which, in the light of the Cross, are seen to be sins of consequence,* from which we must strenuously escape, if we would live unto righteousness.

Righteousness, in the old Chinese ideograph of *sheep* and *my* (not stealing my sheep), is a respect for the rights of our neighbour. And let it be set down emphatically that he who ignores his neighbour's rights is no righteous man. Righteousness, in the Old Testament, is a respect for the rights of God, as well as of our neighbour. The rights of God, as regards Himself, are, to be obeyed absolutely, and to be loved supremely, for only thus can the sacred demandings of His authority and benevolence be met. And the rights of God, as regards our neighbours, include from all "men of God," a neighbourly aid by intercession—that they may be brought and kept within the realm of that sovereign authority and benevolence. Thus Samuel exclaims: "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you"; and the office of intercessor has passed on, from the line of the prophets, to even the least in

* "Wo viel Licht ist, ist starker Schatten" (The shadow is deeper where the light is strong).—Goethe.

the Kingdom of Heaven, ever since the Gospel dawn.

In the New Testament, all earlier ideas of righteousness are confirmed, deepened, broadened, and crowned by a prayerful regard for the rights of the Lord Jesus Himself. If in the Old Testament there is the problem of a good man, such as Job, being subject to evil, instead of the good that was due to his goodness—the New Testament is alive throughout with a far deeper problem: the righting of the wrongs of the wholly good Jesus Christ. And no man who has in any wise entered into the Calvary Tragedy, as an unspeakable wrong on its earthly side, can read and apply to the case such words as: "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied," without feeling that he himself, who as a sinner had a share in that Tragedy, must also have a share in righting the Wronged One. No ransomed soul, with any assurance of pardon through that Atonement, can relegate the righting of the wrongs of Christ to Divine justice, in the distant future, beyond this visible scene; but must be roused to make it a personal enterprise, here on the earth where Christ once suffered, and still does suffer, so much ignominy.

For, added to the great historical wrongs of old, is not the Lord Jesus enduring daily wrongs upon

the earth of His redemption ? Then, He came to His own, and His own received Him not. Now, the Christ of God is despised and rejected by the bulk of the populations of Christendom ; and His full *rulership* is rejected, if not despised by many a church attendant. True, He is belauded, but it is as a minister to their personal comfort and peace, and scarcely as *Despotēs*—Absolute Master. They regard not His Sovereign rights, as the Divine Deputy of the Eternal. Not a few of them would be inclined to follow another religion to-morrow, if it promised them more assured comfort and peace. They would surrender the name, as they have the reality, of life-long devotion to Him. The heart of the Lord burns ever with redemptive benevolence, with fervent zeal for His Kingdom on earth ; but He finds in so many of us who are called by His name a strange indifference to His own master-passion. His plan of campaign is to win the world through His followers " tarrying for power from on high " (Luke xxiv. 49 ; Acts i. 14) ; but He finds so many of us have not learned the primary lesson of " waiting on the Lord," and know not what is meant by " continuing of one accord in prayer and supplication." And thus is He baffled, instead of conquering and ruling on earth wherever He has redeemed. For He trusted His own to obey Him.

No sort of religious awakening will be worth the name which does not make these wrongs of His intolerable. But when once that awakening comes, and we see the Cross confronting us, and realise it all in the light of eternity, then a great instinct of fairness arises within us and cries: "Justice for the Lord Jesus! Righting for the Wronged One! My Lord and Master shall have His rights—in my own life, and if I can do aught, in other lives also!" For Christian righteousness begins when we come to regard Christ's wrongs as our own.

II. The second half of the New Testament Gospel is that of Inwrought Adequacy through the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ, in response to prayer and supplication.

God had been manifest in the person of one special Son of humanity—who was despised, rejected, and, for a time, apparently put out of all account; God was now to be manifest through those connected with that One, and manifest to such a degree that their lives should partake of Christ's own victorious adequacy towards all things good, and should carry an influence everywhere tending toward conversion to Christ as Lord and Redeemer. The former of these items would necessitate a great dynamic uplift from the ordinary to the ideal in human nature; and the

second, wherever there was either unthinking or thought-out opposition to the claims of Christ, would need a great force of dynamic suasion, to arrest and capture for Christ the mind, and will, and the heart's devotion of men.

In modern days, great problems in dynamics have been undertaken, and carried to a successful issue, through the application of natural forces, by those who have mastered the secrets of those forces, and whose workmen may have been uneducated natives of half-civilised regions. And here, in like manner, was a problem in spiritual dynamics, initiated by Christ Himself—who was fully cognisant of the forces Divine—through the hearts and lives of His followers, to whom those forces, and the conditions of receptivity, were new and untried things; but who had to be brought into full co-operation with the Master-mind of the enterprise.

The records of the first new manifestation of Divine Spirit-energy describe a compelling forcefulness gained for public preaching; and we are not all preachers. The most notable effects of that Energy took the form since known under the name of a Revival, and that Energy does not always work with explosive vigour upon the hearts of the disobedient. The Spirit of God-in-Christ is well described as "seven-fold." His grace is of mani-

fold potency. It ranges from that of a flashing light, bewildering the eye with the splendours of heavenly Truth, to that of a quiet revealing of our own condition of soul, and the yearnings of Christ to usward ; it ranges from that of a sin-consuming blaze, to that of a genial blood-heat of moral healthfulness ; or again, from that of a resistless force which rends the rocks asunder, to that of a cheering sufficiency for all Christly service, and for all necessary doing and bearing. But ever are its two chief results the same : the ennobling of personal character into true Christian character, and the exaltation of Christ to His due place in the world. And the records of its first great manifestation can never be studied too often.

The words " bearing our sins in His own body " are quoted from a letter of Simon Peter, erstwhile a simple fisherman of Galilee. This letter of his, containing depths of thought sufficient to engage the pens of many modern intellects, forming material indeed for many books, and still quite unexhausted in its living freshness—this letter itself more than suggests that the fisherman-writer had been subject to a marvellous arousal of mental and spiritual faculties.

The records of Louvain give the case of one, Quentin Metsys, a young blacksmith of Antwerp, who abandoned his rough trade for the fine arts,

all for love of a fair lady, and gained both her and much skill as a painter. Was there not something corresponding to this, in sacred regions, in the more wonderful case of this fisherman of old ?

It was a great devotion, and a deep sense of the wrongs of Christ as Lord—not merely the wrongs of Jesus as martyr—which quickened him, and other Galilean peasants, into would-be heralds of a new era. There was another Simon in the little circle, one called " the Zealot," whose zeal for the Law was a zeal of political fervour. He seems to have been once attached to a patriotic league, such as exist, if often in secret, in nearly all subject nations. He was fired with the wrongs of his fatherland. But even political fervour, at its very highest, may be of lesser intensity than that which makes the wrongs of the Lord Jesus one's own. Simon Peter, like his namesake, was fervent in spirit concerning national wrongs (and was probably the spokesman in the appeal concerning the " restoration of the kingdom to Israel," Acts i. 6). But once realising, at Easter dawn, the true personality of his wronged Master—then, amid great heart-throes, the ambassador for God-in-Christ began to be born in him.

In the new zeal which possessed him, Simon Peter was the one who most of all needed the restraint of His Master's last words—Christ's Last Com-

mission, so negative in form, so necessary in policy—to advocate His claims nowhere, anear or afar, until there has been full and complete "waiting upon the Lord" for the spiritual Power that must characterise the Gospel era.

For, as the life of Jesus was the vehicle of a great Divine energy—called the power of the Holy Ghost, so also the Gospel of Christ must always be a vehicle of the same Divine energy—a veritable "dynamic of God," to penetrate the heart, and dethrone the self-will. And that dynamic force Divine cannot possibly be given out by any preacher before it has been taken in. There must be fidelity to the receptive side of life before there is any attempted proclamation of the Gospel of Sacred Energy.

Such is, for all time, the imperative principle behind the last words of the Lord. And it was eminently imperative in the case of the lowly apostles, with their message of accusation. Here were certain peasants fired with a passion of zeal concerning one whose body had disappeared after a public execution. Their zeal might itself be a force, but they needed power to rule that force. Else would they have been scouted as mere blusterers. Or, their noisy advocacy of Jesus' claims might have stirred up another riot in Jerusalem. For those who are secretly conscious of wrong-

doing cannot readily forgive the wronged one or his associates, especially if the latter grow definitely accusative.

In Peter's soul there was the poignant sense of a foul wrong to be righted—the wrong done to Christ by others, and the wrong done to Christ by himself. The latter made the sum-total of wrong so real in its ghastliness. He could not sever himself from the wrong-doers, spite the royal pardon received. And can any preacher of Christ?

Strenuous advocacy was demanded of him as some amends for his past unfaithfulness. The wrongs of Christ reverberated within him. But to move others to obedience to an absolute Master, he must himself be obedient to that Master's commands, even the hard commandment to wait receptively, day after day, in the presence of God,—to wait for Divine credentials.

He had learnt too well his own limitations, in the absence of "watching unto prayer." Now, with the rest of the band, he set himself to prove the grand sufficiency of God, under conditions of strenuous prayerfulness. And truly, the Divine enabling, for which he waited, would have to be of a marvellous order, to make his advocacy at all effective. It were a mad enterprise, otherwise, for a rude peasant to claim a high majesty for one who had been *crucified*.

The Christian centuries have hidden from us the shame of the cross. The art and sentiment of many generations have reversed all its hideousness, as when a photographic plate has been "printed out," so that the depths of gloom become the high lights. It is hard indeed for us, therefore, to reverse in our minds all the glowing radiance, so as to see once more in the cross the revolting associations that really belonged to it. It was harder still for the early advocates of Jesus to convey to their hearers any vestige of dignity in one who had suffered its depth of ignominy. The cross stood for all that was repellent and loathsome. It was not to be mentioned to ears polite. The names of the crucified were banished from all decent remembrance.

Jesus Himself had quoted the cross on two occasions; once as a harsh note of warning to would-be disciples, concerning the extreme perils of His mission (Matt. x. 38; Luke xiv. 27), even as some later reformers might say, in less ancient language: "He who would follow me must do so with the hangman's rope already round his neck"; but also in the sense of foulest shamefulness. His other reference to the cross (Matt. xvi. 24; Mark viii. 34; Luke ix. 23) was in words of scathing invective against the rampant selfishness which clamoured for fat official emoluments in an altogether misunderstood kingdom. For such was the

dream-self of the disciples which spoilt their discipleship. Instead of the lowly men of God for which the Master had hoped, these peasants were becoming mere *authority-graspers*. The one question in their minds was as to which of them should be the greatest mandarin. That dream-self of theirs, the mandarin-self, instead of being fondly cherished by them, was to be "disowned," not only as born of foolish imaginings, but drastically, as being a traitor to Christ's Kingdom. It was to be regarded as a disgraceful villain, as a condemned malefactor with the cross on his back, led forth to destruction. If Jesus was to have any true followers that He could own as such, that spirit of authority-grasping, which was so untrue to Him, must be drastically scouted every day,* as worthy of the abhorrent cross. And now the name of Jesus had become abhorrent, blasted by the foul disgrace of the cross. And Peter and the

* How far is the colloquial "self-denial" from these words of our Lord! Its shallowness is exposed by the grammar-book itself. Unlike the Greek *arneomai*, our English word *deny* is capable of two objects, one direct and the other indirect. And in the phrase *self-denial*, *self* becomes the indirect object, the direct object being luxury of often a minor sort. The word used by Jesus was *disown* or *repudiate for very shame*. Christians were to disown the authority-grasper within them (which in after-ages became the bane of the Church) in favour of the true disciple-self which followed Christ, and walked humbly with its God. The real "denial of self" is thus the drastic mortification of all self-centredness.

rest were to reverse the whole conception of those concerned in His death. Truly a mad enterprise, apart from marvellous aid from above!

Peter was assured in his own mind that Jesus the crucified was alive, and not just as Lazarus was alive—resuscitated by a power not his own to a condition like that of his previous life, but raised from the dead in a glorious fashion, as having life in Himself. Thus had His body left the grave-clothes intact, and had dissolved out of them, into the fulness of a new vigour. He had proved Himself the Prince of Life, who "could not be holden of death."

To believe this was one thing, to realise it another. It had all come to Peter as in a dream, and as the words of a dreamer would his testimony seem to the multitudes. He must realise it himself to such a degree as to project that realisation into the hearts of Jesus' enemies. He must gain a conviction which would convict them in an altogether dynamic fashion—overturning their deep-rooted prejudice, dethroning their self-will, and reversing the wrongs of the Heaven-throned Christ.

Something like a resurrection would have to take place within him, quickening his faculties into a new life of commanding witness-bearing. He would have to be filled with the power of the risen

Christ Himself, if he was to evidence Him forth as a reigning Reality. Only thus could happen any miracle at Pentecost, such as the turning of thousands to Christ, in the place where He suffered. Was such power to be had ? Was the living Master as real as all this ? Was His own life-force as communicable as all this ?

It was even this that Peter set himself to prove, in those days of ardent waiting upon the Lord.

He already knew God as Authoritative Justice and Goodness. He must learn to know the Spirit of God-in-Christ as an adequate Enabler—an irradiant Force as of fire, to kindle and melt the hearts of men. And thus he approached the resources of Omnipotence, and lingered there, praying heart-in-heart prayers with his comrades, and some faithful women, for ten days together, until the Divine energy filled him. And then he gained his message for the thronging crowds.

That message itself was forceful. " This Jesus whom you began by regarding as a ministering servant to your comfort and peace, and ended by rejecting as inconvenient to your whole view of things—this same Jesus whom you thrust from you with violence, and thought to destroy, is none other than *the Authoritative One*, enthroned by God on high. In the words of the old Psalm, He is even now awaiting the submission of His

opponents." Yet this vivid message, apart from Divine co-operation, might easily have aroused as much incredulity among the multitudes as did his denial of discipleship among a few in the courtyard previously. Or, haply, gaining their credence, through the aid of an accusing conscience, it might have lacked—what many a modern sermon lacks—forces of actual revolution, sufficient to overturn the ruling self-will, which ever rejects the Lord Christ, however clear are His claims of soul-mastery.

But, gaining the power Divine, then all things Divine, and the Divine Christ, shone forth in the minds of the hearers with soul-compelling splendour and became dominant factors in their repentant and prayerful lives.

Conversion to Christ is far more than a new credence of truths concerning Him. It begins in a conviction that the cherished self-estimate of things must give way to God's view of the case. It proceeds as a revolution from the rule of Passion to that of Principle; from the seemingly normal of self-will to the eternal Norma of God's gracious mastery, through Christ Jesus. It is a decentralisation of forces that had seemed to make for liberty, in favour of the Gospel forces of freedom from godlessness. These great Gospel-forces the early messengers of the Cross had themselves received to the full, and thus the eternal Norma

blazed forth through their message, with invincible persuasiveness.

Freedom from the tyranny of the abnormal is the goal of all political revolution, however the revolutionaries may blunder and fail. Freedom from the tyranny of the abnormal, in moral and spiritual regions, is the goal alike of conscience and of the Gospel of Christ. When God in man persuades, there cannot but be an arousal of conscience. When God in man pours forth His full Gospel-forces, there cannot but be a revolution in favour of rightness toward God in heaven, and the righting of Christ's wrongs on earth, through the exercise of faith and the continuance of supplication in each of the recipients.

God in man is a formula befitting the life of Jesus, as that life is viewed by men of varied theological status, or professedly of none. In "the man Christ Jesus," human nature with all its passions was in such prayerful accordance with God, that there was unimpeded Divine immanence. There was God-saturation. In the Church projected by God's visible Deputy on earth (and whose essentials He sketched as: Two or three heart-knit in His name, with His presence in the midst), there was also to be unimpeded Divine immanence—the fulness of His indwelling Spirit. Thus *God in man* was to be the great and permanent

characteristic of that transfigured band—the Church of Christ on earth. It was to be always a band of men and women, youths and maidens, "strengthened with all power, according to the might of His glory" (Col. i. 11), in whom God should "work both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 13). Such an ideal, first realised at Pentecost, is to be recognised as attainable by humanity everywhere.

Jesus declared Himself essential to the future of the race at large, as no other religion-founder has ever done. In all His utterances there was a kingliness of moral authority to which none other has ever pretended. And when to His follower's full acceptance of this kingly authority, there is added a prayerful appropriation of the sacred power of His Spirit, the human problem receives its initial solution in each Christian character, and begins to be solved around each Christ-controlled life. The various human relations receive a large fulfilment wherever Christ reigns; and the old moral debility is changed to moral robustness wherever the Christ-Spirit dwells. The human relations expand, indeed, to embrace the whole world of needy ones; and the prayer-force grows into winsome aggressiveness everywhere.

The Spirit of Christ, indwelling through prayer, is all as adaptive as the vast Nature-Force inherent

in vegetation. Filled with that mystic force, each several tree and flower develops towards its true form and comeliness; and filled with that sacred Spirit, human nature unfolds towards its thousandfold ideal. Through this dynamic of godliness, man attains his true manliness, woman her true womanliness, children their true child-likeness; and all attain their true neighbourliness, in a pervasive influence, as gentle as it is forceful, upon other lives around. God is allowed His true place in man, and man assumes his true place in the world—no longer put to the blush by passionless vegetation. Christ is enthroned, and God is glorified in those whom He has made expressly to glorify Him on earth, and to enjoy Him for evermore.

PRAYER IN ITS ESSENCE

" 'Tis rather God who seeks for us,
Than we who seek for Him."

F. W. Faber.

V

PRAYER IN ITS ESSENCE

In the foregoing pages it has been indicated that prayer to God is a highly valuable factor in the solution of the complex problem which human nature everywhere presents. And as the quality of prayer is largely determined by its unseen goal, there has been an attempt to show what the word *God* should connote, namely, a personal Supreme, whose prominent characteristics are Righteousness and Benevolence, both alike backed by Moral Authority; and also a generous outflow of Power to help towards rightness and goodness, in response to the prayer of need. These essentials of what God should be to usward are suggested by the requirements of man's religious consciousness, and confirmed by the stated experience of those who have written our Bible. Authoritative Right and Lovingkindness, and Power to help the prayerful, are stamped on each page of the older volume; and in the later section Authoritative Justice and Mercy are seen to be harmonised and brought near

to us in Christ the Redeemer, and Power to help the prayerful is the living principle in the indwelling of the Spirit of God-in-Christ.

Such a God being man's higher environment, from infancy to old age, and prayer being a means of intimate contact with that higher environment, we may now put the question: What constitutes prayer itself? For although no stated definition of this exercise was deemed necessary in the Sacred Writings, it may be that, in these days, some clear-cut ideas are demanded by the inquiring spirit of the age; and, once gained, may be useful both in urging the prayerless to pray, and in encouraging those to whom prayer is the marrow of life.

What do we mean by *prayer*? The geologist or mining prospector, examining some new region, may exclaim: "Here is silver!" or "Here is gold!" meaning, as we know, an ore or quartz in which there is a percentage of silver or gold, combined or mixed up with much that is neither. To the chemist, on the other hand, *silver* means the pure element *Ag*, and *gold* the pure element *Au*, conceived as free from any chemical or mechanical admixture. And when we ask: "What is prayer?" it is well to place ourselves, as far as is possible, in the position of the ultimate analyst. For the word *prayer* is often loosely applied to any petition however vain, offered to any god however

imaginary. And we are hoping to consider a noble faculty in humanity, whose outcome is active response to man's higher environment, a response typified by the response of vegetation to the subtle elements which, though unseen, may be appropriated in such wise as to become substantially upbuilding.

The old words of the world for *prayer* denote an essentially sacred exercise. That in the Hebrew seems based on the ideas of arbitration and intercession, as originally connected with the office of priest-leader (in the mother-land of Chaldea) or of patriarchal priesthood (at the beginnings of the Hebrew race); thus yielding the general sense of petition addressed to a deity under sacred conditions. In like manner the Chinese signs for *prayer* contain the " worship radical "—corresponding to the cross-like prefix of ancient Chaldea—which is attached to all signs for things definitely religious. From both West and East Asian words we may deduce a rudimentary idea of prayer as *the expression of godward desire.* Then, from the passages in the Old Testament concerning prayer in its worthiest form, we gain the more definite idea of prayer as *the outflow of godly desire.* And this may serve as a starting-point in what may become, as we explore the case further, a simple philosophy of prayer and its results.

It is a trite saying that man is a bundle of desires. There seems to be inherent in the genus *homo* a veritable ferment of dissatisfaction, which can only be kept within bounds by consummate effort. To the animal creation, food, shelter, mating, and a certain amount of companionship seem to yield complete satisfaction. Given these, there is found, among the beasts of the field a sleek contentment, which easily becomes delight, and among the birds of the air an apparent ecstasy of enjoyment. Not so with us for long beyond childhood. "Man is not what you would call a happy animal, his appetite for sweet victual is too enormous." Given victual, there is a craving for sweet victual; given every possible necessity there is a craving for every possible—or impossible—luxury in mind, body, or estate. Each luxury soon becomes a necessity to us, and the appetite is but whetted for more.

> Wine craves more wine; and carriages
> Crave cushions where success may sit
> And pout.*

The desire for more than we enjoy, whatever our sources of satisfaction, seems part of our being. Among Asiatic nations, where proverbs form the current philosophical *credo*, one of the commonest

* F. Niven. The first sentence is part of a witty Chinese proverb: "First men swallow wine, then *wine swallows* (more) *wine*, then wine swallows men."

of sayings is that " man's heart is ever insatiable." And General Gordon seemed but to express a dozen of these proverbs when he wrote in his diary : " Let us have what we will, it does not satisfy."

But in this remark, so apparently commonplace, he puts the case in quite another aspect than that of the Orient at large. The context of his words is that we are made for a sphere that is infinitely better than this world, and therefore all earthly things are necessarily unsatisfying. And this philosophy of man's unsaturation is foreign to all Oriental thought, save that of old Judæa. Elsewhere, the faculty of desire in man is depicted as an abnormal excrescence which it is the business of religion to suppress and eradicate.

In regard to things of earth, the ordinary attitude of Western moralisation is fairly expressed by Crabbe : * " Desires ought to be moderated, wishes to be limited, and covetings (desires for things belonging to another) to be suppressed." But in the Chinese antithesis between " passion and principle," quoted in a former chapter, where the two are said to be wholly irreconcilable, the word rendered " passion " is merely the word *desire* ; and that word with the sign for *heart* added—making it literally *heart's desire*—is always used in a bad sense throughout the Far East. And while

* *English Synonyms.*

the regulation of human desire was the basis of the Stoic philosophy, the total extinction of human desire is the goal of all the greater religions of the Orient. Passionless as vegetation was Lao Tzŭ's ideal for humanity. "Desireless as a brick or tile—such is the Buddha heart," is an approved sentence in a sutra in Chinese,* much read in Japan. And the desirelessness of complete submission to Fate (regarded in Muhammadanism as the will of Allah) is a leading religious sentiment for well-nigh the rest of Asia.

After any considerable residence in Asia, amid the play of such sentiment, the sight of a congregation met for worship in one of our Western towns may awaken some feelings of awe. For these worshippers are quite unfamiliar with the prohibition of desire which is the very soul of Eastern religions. Beneath their outer decorum and passionless mien, what slumbering fires may be there! In those business men and staid matrons, as well as the youths and maidens, what potentialities are latent, in cravings they have never been taught to quench! Condemned by all Oriental religion, how are they directing these mighty ferments? Wiser would they be, for their soul's good, to cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye of all desireful passion, than to let it have full play upon

* The *Wei Mo King.*

anything short of the "highest gifts"; for it is an impetus which grows by exercise, and may become ungovernable at last. Wisest they who have entered the realm of true Christian permissions, who have found in Christ an exalted outlet for all longing desire. For God-in-Christ has the utmost use for that very force which the great non-Christian religions would crush down entirely.

From the Scriptural standpoint man is normally an unsaturated molecule. There are limits to the contentment required of him. Under even the diffused rule of God, wherever the Divine requirement of six days' labour is met, his sense of unsaturation contains within it the potentiality of a higher evolution. "The appetite of the labouring man laboureth for him," and for his nation also, for it tends to make him a factor in national progress. The appetite for some privileges besides those of a living wage—however inconvenient to mediæval over-lords—has been a great force in the rise of all nations worth the name. And moral and spiritual discontentment has been man's highest asset. We can only pray along the lines of our real discontent. God Himself can do nothing for the fully contented.

It is God who has implanted within us the ache of unsaturation, so that, lifted above the plane of the sensual and sordid, it may be touched to the finest

issues, and become an aspiration after divinest easement. Thus, through the alchemy of His grace, the common desire-life of humanity may be transmuted into the prayer-life of ardent sons of God.

An American divine,* in one of his sermons, exclaims: "Man is incurably religious. Created with a hungry soul, man, even when he tries his hardest to be irreligious, longs for something to satisfy his deepest self. No man is beyond religion. It is never hopeless to bring men to Christ";—in which words he seems to develop the germ-thought of General Gordon, much on the lines of our own observations. Yet his utterance will repay a closer consideration.

Taken broadly, as the words were meant to be, we see that here is a fine thought, and a cheering one. Taken literally, we may ask how far the first sentence, in its unqualified form, is true of the race —outside such a land as India, where the religious instinct so often takes precedence of everything else. Does the desire-life of men naturally merge into a life of prayer? As regards our own lands, the answer is manifestly a negative one. True, the germs of religious sentiment are to be sought for and found in all men, and are capable of vast quickening by the Gospel of Christ. But we have

* Phillips Brooks.

only to define the Christian life as *the prayer-life of devotion to Christ* (and it is to be nothing short of this), to find that earnest prayerfulness is the very last thing in Christianity which meets the taste of most men. They will subscribe to the Christian faith, they will own to the redemptive excellence of Christ; they will become, in their way, workers for Him, they will give energy and substance to His cause—with perhaps no idea at all of adopting a *prayer-life* of devotion to Him. That life of prayerfulness, on which so much depends, has to be acquired among Christians themselves, with much help from above.

Whenever a preacher ventures to ask his congregation to devote a definite time daily to strenuous prayer, his words call forth deep searchings of heart in some of the most prominent Christians among his hearers. Not a few of them, if they laid their hearts bare, would say what was once said in a letter by an earnest Church-worker: "I have been brought up in an atmosphere of true religion. I have often helped others in times of doubt and difficulty, and most firmly believe in the power of prayer myself. Yet when I try to shut the door on the outside world, and pray to the Father in secret, all seems so unreal and unsubstantial. If I could realise that God accepted my prayer it might be different. But as it is, I find it so hard

to give half an hour to real prayer, though I know well that I ought to do so."

Allowing for some depression of spirits, and a low condition of physical health, in the writer of the letter, some of the words might yet almost serve, in some congregations, for a General Confession ; and two considerations arise out of such a confession.

The first of these is that a part of our nature is apt to remain at a much more rudimentary stage of development, in regard to the things of God, than we commonly admit. We may perhaps imagine ourselves, at times, to be harassed by intricate puzzles of higher theology, when the root of the matter is that we have hardly persuaded ourselves that God is always our Well-wisher, and that there is in the unseen an Ear always inclined to our prayers or unexpressed longings. Herein is the commonest hindrance to a vigorous prayer-life. Not definite doubt on any one item of creed, but a haunting misgiving concerning the great axiomatic fact underlying the whole. And for this there is no better remedy than patient, obstinate continuance in prayer. " When you cannot pray as you would, pray as you can," says Dean Goulburn. And to this, Fenelon adds kindly words which many should take to heart : " Do not be discouraged at your faults ; bear with yourself in correcting them, as you would with your neighbour. Accustom

yourself gradually to carry prayer into all your daily occupations. Speak, move, work in peace, as if you were in prayer." And both faith and prayer will grow robust by exercise.

The second consideration is truly important as indicating the basis of all real philosophy of prayer. Taking human nature as it is, even when uplifted by a belief in God as Father, and Christ as Redeemer, men, though naturally desireful, are not naturally prayerful. Then, if "faith is the gift of God" (Eph. ii. 8), surely prayer is the gift of God also.

"Heaven produced what is good in me," said Confucius truly. And that good thing which we call godliness is surely from God; it is a response to influences most directly Divine. It follows, therefore, that all *godly desire*, all true prayer, in man is begotten of God. It is Divinely produced. Or, to borrow the language of electricians, it is Divinely induced—by the potency of God's own desires in a responsive soul. "It is God which worketh in you to desire (*thelo*) for His good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 13).

Let us write it down as a basal axiom, then, that *true prayer is the reflex of the Divine desire itself.* And the faith which steals in at prayer-time is the tacit assurance—though we may not put it in so many words—that our prayer is the real expression

of Divine desire working within us. And what greater encouragement than this can visit the soul of man ?

Enthusiasm born of numbers may simulate the true faith that is normally born in the secret chamber, in one soul or more secluded with God. But even then it becomes a great impulse towards daring venture for what is esteemed the cause of God. The Council of Clermont met in the year 1095 to consider the project of a great crusade against the Turks, and broke up amid unanimous shouts of " *Deus id Vult*," which became the battle-cry of that First Crusade. In surer manner, if in humbler fashion, a godly labouring man of a certain English town was wont to relate his answers to prayer, adding the words : " I said to myself, this 'ere is God's will, and my will, so I just claim it." He had learned the logic of faith, based on the essentials of all true prayer—*the coincidence of Divine and human desire.*

That prayer is the reflex in man of the Divine desire itself is expressly assumed in the words of Jesus : " What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them " (Mark xi. 24, A.V.). For here, surely, is meant not merely human desire—whether of the heathen burglar who prays for riches obtained illicitly, or of the law-abiding poor man who prays

for riches in the course of honourable trading, or of suppliants all and sundry who pray for any boon which may make their lives dignified, comfortable and shadow-free; else were human desire, when directed towards the highest deity known, the ultimate ruling-force in the universe: an anomaly which the Lord Jesus never meant to suggest. Rather must we believe that He had in mind desires that are begotten of God, and that kind of "believing" also which is given of God—a sign-manual that the desire within corresponds to the Desire enthroned above. Given this state, then *faith is the hand stretched out to grasp the proffered gift.* And it has been verily so, with large result, as generations of godly souls have abundantly testified.

We need Divine prompting in order to pray. And for us to seek that effectual prompting may require much training and discipline. A fully saturated life would indispose us to pray at all. And so the All-wise has to leave within us some point of unsaturation, in mind, body, or estate, that so our desires may be kindled Godward, until they catch and express the Divine desire itself.

The discipline of life towards true manliness is typical of the discipline of life towards true godliness. Of the former, the Chinese philosopher Mencius says: "When Heaven is about to confer a great office on any man it exercises his mind with

suffering, and his sinews and bones with travail. It exposes him to hunger and subjects him to poverty. It confounds his undertakings. And by all these means it stimulates his mind, hardens his nature, and supplies his incompetencies" (VI. ii. XV. 2). And also, behind all lives of radiant prayerfulness, there will be found, when those lives are fully known, a history of special unsaturation. Herein lies at any rate half the explanation why non-moral evil, or adversity, is allowed to haunt man's lot on earth, do what he will to banish it. Our nature needs the prick of such spurring to urge it along the path of prayer. And the gain is worth all the pangs, if but that path be trodden. For its goal is truly a "great office" for mortals. Those who have gained it have gained freedom of access to the Throne of the universe, with boldness added to their reverence. As intercessory statesmen of the Most High they may help to sway the multitudes of earth, and leave behind them undying influences throughout all generations.

If man needs Divine prompting in order to pray, God also needs man's prayers in order to bestow His best gifts. True, there are gifts of God which He can pour upon the utterly prayerless. "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." But there is a blessedness which God can only give

in response to godly desire in man. Great principles are involved in these conditions of delimitation. In all chemical combination—so essential to the maintenance of life on earth—there has to be a coincidence of mutual affinity, which typifies mutual desire. A magnet has to arouse magnetism in the iron before it can attract it. Fire must warm a substance to fire-point before it can set it ablaze. The Divine desire must arouse in man that which is most related to itself; it must induce godly desire for the nobler gifts of God, before there can be a bestowal of those gifts.

And that desire in man will have to become real effort, the putting forth of what God-given forces he already possesses, in order to gain the full energies of godliness which the Most High so longs to bestow. The healing of the withered hand by Jesus (Matt. xii. 13; Mark iii. 5) is typical of much. "Stretch forth thy hand" was the condition of healing. *The man tried his utmost to do so.* And quick, in a moment, his effort was met by the majestic energies of God-in-Christ. What may become the daily miracle of our receiving a full adequacy of "power from on high" will ever happen on this wise.

Thus far we have been led onward to recognise, beyond the desire-life of humanity—which may overmaster men to their own undoing, or may

constrain them towards the grandest possibilities —a vast region of Divine Desire, from which not a few men have been consciously influenced towards prayerful godliness.

That sublime region of Divine Desire, would that it were given to us to explore it! We are situated much as the dwellers along the coasts of ancient Greece, where, from every cape and headland, islets of the sea were tempting them to take ship and explore the regions beyond. Or like the lads of Devon, in early Elizabethan days, when discoverers came back from voyaging the main to tell of great treasure-continents. For some have visited the sacred Region and have brought a glowing report: the Hebrew ponderers whose words are never ancient; One of the Hebrew race who came forth expressly from God; and here and there some soul of our own times who has lived with God, and who speaks with a confidence which both startles and assures. Thus are we set wishing to explore this ever-New World for ourselves.

The days are long gone by when we can regard our own native spot as the only desire-region in the universe. That were the notion of the heathen who dreamt that all prayerful desire begins in man, and is directed towards the deity with a view of projecting into his mind desires to bless the suppliant. The notion was of the earth earthy. It

was based on the fact of pompous rulership, so absorbed in its own concerns that it needed strenuous petitioning to be aroused to a thought of the "lower populace." "I, the desiring one; he, the self-absorbed being, whose attention it is necessary to arouse, whose indifference it is necessary to overcome, whose sympathy it is necessary to awaken by ardent pleadings"; that outworn idea may still cling to men, and to some Christians perchance, in their times of prayer. But, in the case of our God, it is like trying by fires at dawn to set the sun ablaze! Surely it is the sun that has formed our fuel on earth, and never the fires of earth that kindle the flame celestial. We do not woo our God to warmth, or persuade Him to wish our welfare. It is from His ever-glowing desires that our best desires are kindled.

What, then, is this exalted region of celestial Desire, and how can we know it with any force of realisation? Surely we must gain that knowledge as others have gained it, by tuning our own desires by His grace, until they harmonise with His; and from these rays of God-likeness gain our beginnings of God-knowledge. We must do the will if we would know the doctrine. God must be known by walking with God, by praying to God. And thus the insight will come direct to us, apart from all book-argument.

Among the old psalmists and prophets God was described as pitying His needy ones "like as a father," and when their hearts turned Godward, solacing them "as one whom his mother comforteth." No father can pity without yearning kindness, no mother can comfort without deep penetrative sympathy. And in the words of Jesus, that loving-kindness, that sympathy is exercised towards an unworthy child, a wandering son. That loving-kindness does not crush down his free-will when he determines to go forth afar, whatever it foresees of sin and misery in those wanderings. It sends forth numberless yearnings after him. It watches for the first signs of his return. Indeed, as no parable can show, it implants within him those homeward desires. It nourishes them as far as the will of the wanderer permits. It breathes in the words: "I will arise and go unto my father." It guides and supports each faltering step of the way. And then, revealed to the returning one, who deemed himself the only desirer, it hastens to greet him, and welcomes him home. Thus God deals with each soul of man, if that soul will but let Him. He sees men in their God-forgetfulness, and seeketh souls to pray to Him. He visits them with many anonymous gifts—that they might know are from Him. His love allows them many sore pangs. He urges their better nature, "if haply

they might feel after Him, and find Him, for He is not far from any one of them"—even in the far country. All of which, in its exceeding beauty and pathos, were fitter to be sung than said.

With a world of wandering ones, how can Love Supreme be aught but a great outflow of yearning desire? That mighty yearning, so vast, so intense, so immeasurable, flows forth towards us long before any desire for God is secured from us. And when it is secured, when we at length yield to the Divine inspiration sufficiently to utter one persistent prayer for ourselves, *the contest is more than half won.*

For ever it is God who prays in man, that man may pray to God.

Each true prayer we offer has already achieved more than half its destiny. The deed is more than half done. The one great obstacle is already removed. It is the arousal of godly prayer in us that is the difficulty, and never the gaining of God's response. Our prayers for ourselves, if godly ones, are *answered prayers.* They are *the response to God's great prayer in us.*

Have we awakened to this grand fact, as real as it is wonderful? It must be so if God be God, and God be Love. We should pluck a large faith from facts so fully assured. A "mighty faith" in God is ever a child-like reliance. And we may

rise above all barren questionings, to the child-confidence which says: "This prayer, O Father, is Thy prayer. It has come from Thine own great desires. And as those desires of Thine are fully mine, I know that my prayer must be successful;

> I take the blessing from above,
> And wonder at Thy boundless love.'

Prayer, in its truest essentials, is the outflow of godly desire, induced in man by the vast, yet intimate Desire of the Eternal. And at this stage it will be profitable to examine, as though with fresh eyes, the Scriptural use of certain terms which stand for that Divine Desire—with fresh eyes, lest any popular misunderstanding should mar the result. Clarified thought on such a subject is good in itself, and will be of use in our further studies concerning the nature of prayer.

The current language of the Jewish settlements in "Galilee of the nations" was Aramaic—the language of Damascus and a wide region of Syria—differing somewhat from Hebrew itself, much as Portuguese differs from Spanish, but having most of its root-words in common. Aramaic was the native tongue of Jesus and His Galilean disciples, and at least His Galilean discourses would be in that tongue. The word He would use, in giving the third petition of the model prayer, would be one

which is identical with the Hebrew *ratson*, used in Psalm ciii.: "Ye ministers of His who do His *pleasure*," and in Psalm li.: "Do good in Thy *good pleasure* unto Zion." It is based on the verb *ratsah*, "to have pleasure in," "to be well pleased with," as in Haggai i. 8: "I will *take pleasure* in it." The word is never used but in a pleasant and joyous sense, indicative of delight.

The words of Jesus have come to us in Greek, and again, a never-dismal word has been chosen, to correspond with that of the Aramaic—the word *thelēma*, "desire." Applied to God by St. Paul, it is defined as the desire for that which, to usward, is ever "good and perfect and acceptable" (Rom. xii. 2), or as we should now say, "eminently desirable." Its general sense is further indicated by words used of a woman in her choice of a husband: "She is free to be married to whom she *will*"—that is, to the object of her special desire (1 Cor. vii. 39). The man of her choice is doubtless "good and acceptable" in her eyes. She prepares to wed him with real delight. And it is this dominant thought of delightsomeness which every one who knows his Father in Heaven must ever associate with His sacred desires, if he would hallow the name of his Father.

It is with serene delight that the ministers on high fulfil God's pleasure. And the response

which Nature yields to that good pleasure is ever delightsome. The sun shines forth in glory, and earth puts forth her buds and blossoms, amid the notes of gladsome birds. Each stalwart tree, rich in its tracery of leaf and bough, grows thus in response to the desire of God. It is thus the roses and the violets, and their unnumbered sisters, breathe forth their fragrance; and the fruits of the earth grow sweet and wholesome, to cheer the heart of man. The desire of God is Paradise Regained, for all that has life and breath. Heaven and earth responsive sing their psalms of joy. And a joy that is beyond all words befits us too, as we know ourselves to be "ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven," and crowned with hope of glory, all in fulfilment of the great desire of God in Christ.

It would be well if always, in our minds, we were to substitute the words "glorious desire" for the colder term "will" of our God.* That latter term, as we now read it, is in the Greek *boulē*, "determinate counsel" (Acts ii. 23), and not *thelēma*. By the "will" of the Supreme, we usually mean "the determination of one possessing authority," as the dictionary explains our English

* In the works of some English divines contemporary with the translators of our 1611 version, we find the phrase: "His will and pleasure," which meets the case half-way.

term. And while the lofty poetry of the words: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," enshrined in the heart of Anglo-Saxon Christianity, would make a revision of the text itself too daring a venture, we must understand that "kingdom" and "will," in the Lord's prayer, represent two distinct, if related, ideas, rather than just one idea. To the former word belong all ideas of regal majesty, of authoritative dominion—*the Divine determination* of One who "must reign" on earth eventually as He reigns in heaven always; while to the second word belongs the idea of all-pervading sympathy—*the Divine yearning for all that is brightest and best*, where the supreme authority is veiled in sacred winsomeness, to woo the hearts of men.

We have thus in the Scriptures two words: *desire* (thelēma), and *determination* (boulē), used of our Father and King respectively. The two are united in God, but mark two distinct sides of His nature.

The outlook of our Father's desires includes and surpasses all our loftiest ideas of what is supremely desirable. And yet, from certain harsh meanings read into an English word "will," it has been the fashion of modern piety to adopt an attitude of pallid submission towards those ever-glorious desires, rather than of blithesome acquiescence in

them, as he would do who caught the light of the Father's countenance.

These sublime desires of over-brooding Sympathy, under the term "will of God," have certainly called forth a series of hymns to be sung in churches, but with the exception of one hymn beginning:

> I worship thee, sweet will of God,
> And all thy ways adore.

that series is to be found under such a heading as "Resignation," for their topic is that of forcible deprival, actual or expected, for which the grace of resignation is prayed for, in tearful strain. Indeed one hymn, taught to children as well as sung by adults, identifies the "good pleasure" of our Father in Heaven with such things as "pining sickness" and "premature decay!"

Looking at our Lord's words, as we render them in English: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," we see that the context should assure us of the brightness intended. For in heaven there is no wasting sickness or premature decay, there is no death, neither sorrow nor crying. And we are clearly wide of the mark when we read into the words such uncelestial things as these.

Our Heavenly Father never desires pain, sickness, death, bereavement, for any one on earth, any more than a true mother ever desires them

for a child of hers. "Death is the price we pay for the use of a body"; it is preceded by pain and sickness, and leaves bereavement in its train. All this is inevitable. But disease and death are so far from desirable or delightsome to God, that the former is quoted by Jesus Himself as the work of Satan (Luke xiii. 16), and by St. Paul as "a messenger of Satan" (2 Cor. xii. 7); and the latter as the last "enemy" of Christ and His followers (1 Cor. xv. 26), whose sentence of destruction is already signed.* Satan being defeated by the Cross, and sin being eventually abolished through the power of Christ's spirit in man, death is to be "swallowed up in victory," in the case of all who are His.

As things are, "it is *appointed* unto men once to die," but the *desires* of God pierce through that determinate appointment, to the victory beyond. The farmer *determines* to cast away his "corns of wheat" into the soil, where they are buried and "die," but what he *desires* is the golden and glad-

* While yet the theology of the Hebrews was at its crudest, God was represented as stirring up men who had grown wilful to overt deeds of resistance to Himself—as Pharaoh (Ex. vii. 3, etc.) and David (2 Sam. xxiv. 1), that is, to moral evil. A better understanding possessed the minds of the more thoughtful, as in the book of Job, where physical evil is devised by "an adversary," who, in the case of David, as related in 1 Chron. xxi. 1, is called "the Adversary"—the word having become a proper name. In the New Testament all evil, both physical and moral, is attributed to the Adversary of God and man.

some harvest which is to follow. Not pain or affliction, not sorrow or distress, is desired by God. Although these are determined for many, His desires are wholly set upon the " working together for good " that will follow, to all who love Him. Not death is desired by God, but the glorious spiritual body beyond ; not bereavement, but the blissful reunions beyond ; which could not take place apart from the temporary loss of their inferior and earthly foreshadowings.

Thus Jesus, bowed down under sorest testings, at night in the Garden, thinking aloud in His native language, had felt the desire that, " if it were possible, the hour might pass away from Him," the hour of darkness and dread ; but gained the victory saying : " Howbeit not these temporary shrinkings of mine be allowed to rule, but Thy good pleasure be fulfilled." And meant, surely, not just His acceptance of the morrow's cross and passion *determined* for Him, but of the whole scheme of Divine *desire* for the triumphant redemption, and the reign of grace beyond. That was indeed the meaning of the earlier prayer which anticipated and explained this one : " Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say ? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. *Father, glorify Thy name* " (John xii. 27, 28). In Scripture language, that glory

was "the joy that was set before Him," in the fair vista of His Father's good pleasure. For He knew, what we so often forget, that the desires of the Blessed One are, from first to last, those of highest blessedness.

Thus, too, the corresponding prayer for Christians would be (in the words of Fenelon): "I leave myself in Thy hands; it is enough for me to fulfil Thine all-benevolent designs, and in nothing to resist Thy good pleasure, for which I was created"; or, as a modern hymnologist expresses it:

> Choose for us, God! nor let our weak preferring
> Cheat our poor souls of good Thou hast designed.

God "suffered His Holy One" to be crucified. But His desire itself was the joy set before Him, and still set before Him—of "bringing many sons unto glory" (Heb. ii. 10), of uplifting many, who had fallen short of the glory of their manhood and of the glory of God, into the present and eternal glory of realised sonship in the sacred family of God. An enterprise this, attainable only through untold hardship, of which the atoning cross was the agonising climax, and the prelude also—for though the redemption of mankind is completed, the salvation of mankind has only begun.

We lose ourselves in Oriental Court imagery when we regard the joy of the Lord Jesus to be that of sitting in royal state, continually praised by His

courtiers on high. The joy of a true king is not in courtly praises, but in a prosperous realm, where all are blessed by his governance. The glory of a true sovereign lies in the number, and the felicity, of his subjects. The setting up of a realm may involve the conquest of a usurper; the prosperity of a realm must involve the winning of all hearts that should be under its sway. Christ crucified became King of Humanity. God's desire, and Christ's as King, is the gaining of all human hearts to His gracious dominion. And until that sacred desire is fulfilled on earth, the final prayer in Gethsemane ever pours forth. It was then, it is now: "Thy desires and mine, O Father, be fulfilled on earth, as in heaven."

We miss so much, we miss the mark entirely, if we delimit the prayer in the Garden to the resignation of an over-wearied man, in view of the morrow's cross—an event which was ended nigh upon two thousand years past. That prayer is an historical one, but it is ever a present-tense prayer also. It is still pouring forth from the Redeeming Presence, high in the heavens, and here upon earth —in the midst of earth's sins and woes.

Then, mark you, that prayer in the Garden: "Thy desires be fulfilled," has for us men its practical and perpetual significance. The redemption of the world having been achieved on

the cross, once for all, whole ages ago, the winning of men everywhere into sons and daughters of God, and loyal subjects of Christ, is the present meaning thereof. And we each who ponder these things, we each—wondrous thought!—have our part allotted in answering that prayer.

We are to magnify the fatherhood of God, by adding to the number, and the quality, of His true sons and daughters. We are to magnify the sovereignty of Christ, by adding to the number, and the quality, of his loyal subjects. We are to determine, with celestial passion of zeal, that the wrongs of Christ be speedily righted; we are to see to it that certain words be expunged from the Scriptures—in their sense of a present-day statement—the words which declare that on earth "the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head," that is to say, His heart. We are to see to it that the Man of Sorrows, in his royal sympathy, is no longer despised and rejected of men; that the King of Love shall be the King of Joy upon earth—righted, accepted, adored—and His glory secured through man's blessedness everywhere. For this is the scope of the prayer in Gethsemane, a prayer learnt by us, to offer on Christ's behalf, and in His Spirit—a prayer to be pleaded, and lived out daily: "Thy sacred desires be fulfilled, on earth as in heaven."

God's ardent desires are to be fulfilled on earth always through the co-operation of men's ardent desires, even as so many of His desires have been negatived by the absence of such co-operation, or defeated by desires and passions antagonistic to His own.

The freest and least coercible part of man is his desire. Under strong pressure he may *determine* to do what he has no *desire* to do, for determination is more tied down to circumstances than is desire. Were the " will of God " to connote His authoritative determination, it would seem to be a grander thing than His longing desire, which any man may set aside, almost without effort. But such Divine determination would be of inferior moral potency to Divine desire, in its chosen sphere in the hearts of men. It could only coerce circumstances, and through them force men's determination. It could not of itself touch and penetrate and win the desire of man, as the Divine desire seeks to do, in the Gospel, through Christ and His Spirit. The evil that lurks in man lurks primarily in his desires, and it is from that region that God endeavours to eject it ; the good of which man is capable must be implanted primarily in his desires, and it is this region that God endeavours to win for Himself—until there is born in man *godly desire*, or prayer, the promise of all further blessedness.

On the primal beginnings of evil, metaphysically considered, it is not for us to multiply words. A mother with her little ones will often have less difficulty than the metaphysician, in picturing the origin of evil in the universe, for she knows that in the best and most obedient child there is a strong desire for personal experiment, a desire in itself natural and commendable, but which may, by easy stages, become an unfilial opposition to a good parent—that form of moral evil, indeed, which most impressed the framers of the ancient codes of Asia.

The evil within humanity entered primarily through unguarded desires, and does thus enter afresh in every generation. And herein lies so much of the human tragedy—that evil which enters, half unobserved, into the soul through desire is not, when once settled there, to be ejected with the ease that it entered. Rectified human desire of itself does not mean deliverance.

Nor do the forces of evil, and the havoc wrought by them, yield to bare authority, however Divine. Those forces in man can hardly be disannulled by any fiat of determinate counsel.

Those forces of evil are *dynamic discords*, arising at first from unthinking desire,* which soon

* "There is an enmity with God which is not combative, which is merely indifferent and uninterested."—*Church Times*, Jan. 6, 1911.

divorced itself from Divine desire. Their abolition must be wrought by the reunion of the twain—a reunion in which human desire, being won by Divine suasion, and wedded once more with Divine desire, shall give birth to a new potency of godliness. For in the union of the Divine and the human a truly *dynamic harmony* is generated. Each needs the other in order to become thus effective.* But what a fiat of determinate counsel could never do, may be done in man by the meeting and blending of the ardent desires of God and man. And this is the Gospel of prayer, in its essence.

God's redemption of the world had to be achieved through the full co-operation of the desires of the Son of Man, who is also the Son of God; personal salvation is to be gained through the full co-operation of the desires of each son of man, who becomes a son of God; and the uplifting of the world—the higher evolution of men and things—is to be achieved through the full co-operation of the desires of many sons of men, who through Christ are sons of God also.

Let us consider this last great enterprise of God.

* Compare a musician and his instrument:

"And yet, my violin, without me thou wert mute,
And unresponsive in thy velvet nest would lie;
All silent as a long-forgotten lute,
Thus thou without me—thus without thee I."

H. J. O., 1878.

Whatever may have been St. Paul's ultimate thought when he wrote of a " groaning and travailing creation, gazing eagerly as with outstretched neck, waiting and longing to see the manifestation of the sons of God " (Rom. viii. 22, 19), and whatever our precise view of the evolutionary processes through which the great Evolver has been working hitherto, it is obvious that a creation moving on through stress and strain may become subject to an evolution towards " deliverance," when the Divine desires are adopted by men who, becoming God's sons, in the widest sense of the word,* become His assistant evolvers on earth.

Instead, man has so often been the devolver. The creation has suffered unspeakably from lawless human passion. Himself in a condition of discord with the heart of the Highest, man has wrought huge mischief in his own surroundings.

It may have been a foregleam of Science which at the commencement of the Chinese Historal Records (in a portion written not later than the first century B.C.) affirms that " there was at the first the utmost amity between men and things, but as men grew subtle these others developed horns and fangs and claws and poison." In various ways man may have had much to do with the " reddening " of the " tooth and claw " in Nature. Nine-

* As peace-makers are said to be.

tenths of our modern diseases are traceable to bacteria which, in the early ages, were harmless and useful. It was at first in connection with physical errors and moral misdoings that these bacteria developed their several forms of harmfulness, and "the diseases of Egypt" became a phrase of terror. Whereat, we note in passing, men in their ignorance have had the effrontery to attribute such diseases to the "will" of their God, rather than to their own neglect of that cleanliness which, in the Mosaic law, is so allied to godliness!

Certain it is that Nature, spite her fine start of humanity in the early days, has suffered much from men's errors, and, thus outraged, has caused men to suffer in their turn. While the older interpreters of prophecy see desolation overtaking the various lands of the Bible almost *because of* the inspired utterances of the prophets, the enlightened see clearly Divine justice working through natural laws upon those lands. And the modern physiographist extends his view to other regions where men's sins have not been so vividly recorded, but where his errors have wrought similar havoc.

The broad region from Mesopotamia to Mongolia was once the cradle of populous nations and the home of natural fertility. That vast tract of country was once dotted with prosperous towns

and their outlying homesteads. But at men's mutual strife, instead of mutual aid, Nature began to wreak her inevitable revenge. Until eventually, when her woodland groves and forests were cut down, and the undergrowth on the hills destroyed, the rains but washed down barren sand, instead of fertilising elements; the streams from the hills became impetuous, sinuous, and unmanageable; climatic conditions were disturbed, and there began a series of floods and droughts attended with scarcity and famine, so that these regions had to be abandoned by townsman and farmer, and became the waste places of the earth, wherein is no joy and singing, but the howl of ill-fed beasts of prey. Thus was accomplished the extreme opposite of the evolution depicted in the exalted strains of the thirty-fifth chapter of Isaiah—the vision of what might have been; and of what may yet be, when God gains man on His side.

In lands that we view under the lurid gleams of Scripture denunciations, we see the letting loose of greed and rapacity, of oppression and violence, of war and massacre, and the eventual spoliation of all good things.

And these great forces of devolution, let us remember, all had their beginnings in the desires of little children, in quite insignificant germs, when first the selfishness natural to infancy was allowed

to persist and expand, unchecked by a sense of principle within, or by authority based on principle without; then, gaining strength and consequence, to the over-riding of all principle whatever. And with what after-developments! Developments these, which had a very potent devil in them before their devastating course was done; and the dumb groanings of Nature were added to the death-cries of nations and peoples!

God's world—still God's—awaits the tramp of a host as mighty as that of the ravagers. It awaits the training of children's desires, by well-poised authority, towards the full rule of principle, and a passion of helpfulness; it awaits the uprising of youths and maidens who have learnt in the school of Christ the grandeur of reverence, of sympathy, of forbearing generosity; it awaits the uprising of men of His Spirit, who shall become God-prompted discoverers and God-owning influences; God-inspired healers who will gradually perfect all medical processes; God-guided authors whose writings shall be remedial; God-fearing journalists with a sole policy of human uplift; God-owning legislators who cleave to the political party of righteousness; God-ruled statesmen, with minds of world-wide range, whose aim is true international amity; and everywhere men and women in humbler sphere, the basis of the nation, the hope of the earth—

with hearts in their work, and Christ in their lives—who will beautify all they touch, and ennoble waste places into gardens of God, wherein all things shall feel the touch of a new tenderness, and surrender themselves to a new era of harmony.

The glorious desires of our God chiefly concern man's eternal interests, but extend to every aspect of his life on earth. He who clothes the grass of the field desires that no man remain unclothed. He who feeds the ravens desires that no man be unfed. He who adorns the flowers, and sweetens the fruits of the earth, and tunes the notes of the song-bird, desires that no man be uncared-for and dismal, or left with no song in his mouth. God cares for man in his whole condition and circumstance. He desires our whole well-being. And so these things become rightful objects of true Christian energy, of godly desire, of prayer and supplication.

The fulfilment of such prayers involves no disturbance of natural law, but will be attained by the active blending of Divine and human desire, through the harmonious working of laws and principles that are essentially spiritual and natural also.

As God's own desires for man are of such wide scope, and all Godward desires in man partake of the nature of prayer, it follows that the physician

and statesman and many others who ardently desire what God desires, in the enhancement of human health, and the uplift of social conditions, are working, consciously or unconsciously, in the incipient might of prayerfulness. And never more so than when they utilise those medicines and measures into which the Father of all has placed remedial virtue, and has intended to be accompanied by direct prayerfulness on the part of their recipients

The full fruition of the Divine desires on earth requires the full co-operation of human *desire rendered dynamic* by union with the sublime forces of God in Christ. For such " waiting upon the Lord " (Is. xl. 31) as " takes hold of God " (lxiv. 7) and " His strength " (xxvii. 5), " in the name of Christ " (John xvi. 23) is resultant in untold powers of achievement, sufficient in the end to overcome the disintegration of the centuries, and repair the havoc of ungodliness, everywhere, within and around the life of men.

DYNAMIC DESIRE

"No human capacity ever yet saw the whole of a thing; but we may see more and more of it the longer we look."—JOHN RUSKIN, *Modern Painters.*

VI

DYNAMIC DESIRE

Travellers on the plains, who lift up their eyes towards the mountains, may not find it easy all at once to distinguish outlines of cloud-tops from those of mountain-summits; and in new regions of thought it is not difficult, apart from the strictest carefulness, to mistake vapours of the imagination for the solid pinnacle-facts of the mountains of God.

From a rudimentary definition of prayer as "godly desire," we have been led on to the use of such phrases as "desires grown dynamic." Let us seek the utmost clarification of thought in determining whether there be in prayer aught but a subjective sense of helpfulness—whether, indeed, there be in prayer any truly dynamic force to be superadded to the commonly recognised forces that play upon our mundane conditions.

What could be more airy and unsubstantial than the first movings of desire! The fond desires of youth, so ardently cherished in days of inexperience,

are most of them the merest dreams, from which the buffetings of time are sure to arouse the dreamer. In many a language there are current sayings answering to our own colloquialism: "What is the use of wishing?" And perhaps, before mid-age is reached, most men settle down into that very modified "happiness" (so akin to misery itself) of the man who, in Goethe's phrase, "discovers the chasm between his wishes and his powers." We are all familiar with, at any rate, the title of Juvenal's Tenth Satire, as rendered by Samuel Johnson: *The Vanity of Human Wishes.* And there are not a few who regard life itself as "a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel"—a comedy or tragedy of vain desires.

Yet we should shrink from teaching all this to our children. In contact with their vivacity we instinctively feel that this view of the case is one-sided. It fails to take in the whole range of fact and possibility. The day-dreams of youth are not to be hastily quashed by sour-faced experience. For though day-dreams, as such, may seem quite inert and valueless, they are indeed, when lit with hope and confidence, of some present value to their cherisher. At the very least they afford a play-ground for the thoughts. And it is the desireful, hopeful youth who has the best chance of achievement. A desireless, hopeless child would be a sad

anomaly. A disillusioned youth would find his pessimism itself to be a disintegrating force. His life would neither be robust nor successful.

In saying this we are touching the outskirts of broad principles, held more or less for centuries, and emphasised by medical psychology, concerning the dynamic influence of mental conditions upon bodily functions, and the capabilities of life in general.

One of the earliest affirmations on this subject is found in the old Hebrew proverbs: "A merry heart is a good medicine, but a broken spirit drieth up the bones,"—where the word "bones," as in Chinese, stands for the innermost substance of manhood. "I've known the dying to revive through hope" * is a line attributed to Ovid. And a recent medical journal says: "The successful disseminator of hope has in his demeanour a therapeutic asset, capable on occasion of transcending the virtues of his strychnia and bromides."

It has become an acknowledged fact that all movings of the mind—as hopeful desire or disappointment, confidence or fear, pleasant thoughts or anxious cares—have each of them a dynamic impress upon the life faculties. In the robust, these influences may be of a more or less unconscious order; in cases of delicate health the effects may be

* Vivere spe vidi qui moriturus erat.

as marked as the passage of electricity along a wire. Something is indeed telegraphed; some force, helpful or otherwise, is communicated, through the nerves into the system generally. Every emotion becomes an impulse of some sort or another. Indeed, there can be no play of the imagination without some result upon the man who allows it a place in his mind. It is a fact corresponding to that of every gleam of sunshine, every quiet breeze, every gentle shower of rain, producing effects upon the earth which are capable of being expressed in terms of hundredweights or tons of " work " done.

The absence of all desire checks action; the presence of strong desire is a powerful impulse to action. It impels the man's faculties automatically in some direction or other, through his nervous system. From this we deduce the principle that, *in contact with non-resistant or sympathetic media, ardent desire always produces some kind of dynamic impulse.* And, were any given environment as non-resistant and accordant as the nervous system in man, then ardent desire would always produce some effect upon it, and accomplish something through it.

In that case—to present to the mind a vast theme for contemplation—what may not God's ardent desires achieve in contact with fully accordant human souls! And what may not man's

ardent desires effect in contact with a fully sympathetic God!

We catch a glimpse of some of these latter possibilities whenever we study the case of a lately-born infant in the arms of a fond mother, where every desire calls forth the whole faculties of her fully sympathetic personality. And of the former, when we study the case of a general in the midst of his unconquered legions, where every desire of his evokes the whole energies of the fully sympathetic troops. In a word, the possibilities arising from the interplay of Divine desire upon the soul-forces of man, and of human desire upon the spiritual power of God, may be regarded as well-nigh illimitable. And prayer at its realest and best represents, not one side, but both sides, of this grand interplay of forces Divine and human.

To brace our minds for the exalted considerations which the whole case suggests, let us bethink ourselves of what the desires of our God have already achieved in contact with non-resistant media.

Forgetting, as far as we can, the common noises of the street, and all the hubbub of business, or society, or domestic cares, let us recall to mind the most winsome or impressive country scenes we have ever known—lingering passively there. To enter the arcana of Nature at her calmest and fairest is to enter a realm of profound silence,

made evident, rather than broken, by the soft splashings of the brooklet among the rocks, or the rustle of breeze in the loftier tree-tops, or the contented notes of joyous birds. We cease to analyse or define. The spell of a speechless calm is upon us. The response within is of eloquent feeling—our own, and not another's. The best lines of poets seem but as the chatterings of a crowd in a gallery of masterpieces. We want to be alone with our half-formed thoughts. Then, perhaps two short sentences occur to us, and are welcomed. The one is Heine's, that "Nature is visible thought"; the other Sir Thomas Browne's, that "Nature is the art of God." And our minds revert to the time, in far dreamy ages, when visible Nature was not, but only the great Thinker and Artist; when what we call Nature existed but in His prescient thought and desire.

Then, to speak in humanised metaphor—for we have none other to use—matter, that mysterious thing still capable of invisibility, must have been an out-breathing of God; and the forces in matter an impulse from God.

Thus there arose something from Him, distinct from His own personality, but never dissociated from His living Presence. Emanating from God, it could not but contain an inherent tendency to reflect His nature; pervaded by His Presence, it

could not but be subject to the progressive impulse of His desires—along the lines of those ordained principles which we call "laws of Nature," themselves the reflection of the precision of eternal Justice.

Physical matter, then—spiritual in origin, and pervaded with forces born of Divine desires—would itself be possessed of inherent potencies towards progressive order and elaboration, as well as of a general passivity toward the desires of sacred Ideality. And these considerations should go far to satisfy the most orthodox Christian, in view of the assured findings, as distinct from shrewd guessings, of modern Science.

But for our present purpose we are concerned with matter as a medium responsive to an earnest Omnipresence, rather than with the outworking of any inherent evolutionary forces possessed by matter itself.

We have, before our conception, then, an accordant medium, responding to each successive desire of an ever-ardent God. This would naturally result in that condition which, at each stage of the process, would most reflect the Divine nature, or, in its degree, would most resemble God. By that which would most resemble the Creator, we mean the highest potency of which the plastic material was capable. We can but surmise concerning the

primary condition of that Divine emanation which was to become the stuff and substance of the universe. Our minds may perhaps carry us back to the stage when all was vibrant ether, from which arose electrons which, in their turn, formed atoms and molecules. But we see, with some definiteness, the attenuated mass so formed being lifted by the desires of God to the highest potency of inorganic matter—luminosity, suggesting His nature who is the final Reality which *Light* strives to express. Anon, when the inorganic was, part of it, lifted to the organic condition, we see appearing on earth the highest potency of organic matter —vitality, suggesting His nature who is the great Reality which *Life* strives to express. And lastly, when the organic was, part of it, lifted to the condition of vitality, we see appearing on earth the highest potency of vitality—altruistic kindness, reflecting His nature who is the utmost Reality which the purest *Love* strives to express. For among the living things on earth there arose the element of sympathy—to the point of sharing another's concerns. There appeared on earth the love of a mother for that portion of herself which became *not herself*, and yet the object of commiseration more earnest than the instinct of self-interest, or even of self-preservation.

All along the process of sacred Evolution—sacred,

as forming the incipient poem of God—we note also that there was a yielding up of a seeming best for that which was better still. The incandescent earth gave up the high quality of *Light* that it might manifest *Life*, and Life sacrificed its instinct of personal gain to pour out its energies unstintingly as *Love*; thus imaging forth some definite features of the Creator, who was to become, through His Divine Deputy, the self-giving Redeemer.

Through unnumbered stages, of which we have noted the three most clearly defined, we see the Creator's desires becoming dynamic, while as yet the medium upon which His desires were playing was fully plastic and responsive. And further, that responsiveness is to be explained as *desire* in the material itself. For all matter, to the physicist and chemist, is imbued with certain attractions and preferences which may, in the widest sense of the word, be called desires. There is the attraction of gravitation, the desire to unite, in all ponderous bodies. There is chemical combination in most matter—a union according to affinities and preferences; or chemical decomposition—a further union according to a new set of affinities and preferences. The particles of the universe are massed and grouped, or arranged and re-arranged along the lines of inherent preference, or "desire" for what to them is desirable. From the simplest

chemical combination, right through the mundane series, on to the most ideal of human marriages, the Creator's whole enterprise has been conducted through inherent attraction or earnest desire in the medium He has employed. And if chemical affinities and preferences, under the stress of His sacred desires, accomplish much in the realm of inert matter, and cell-attractions and preferences accomplish much in the realm of non-sentiate life, and conscious affinities and preferences accomplish much in the realm of sentiate life, it may be argued that the accordant and ardent desire of every soul turned God-ward may achieve vast results in yet higher realms.

God's whole achievement has been through accordant desire. By that achievement we mean the universe at its fairest and best. And when the human desire-realm becomes ardently attuned to the impact of Divine desire,—then will be seen a renewed world, in which the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, with illimitable forces of blessedness. This is the glorious outlook of that prayer of accordant desire: "Our Father in heaven, Thy desires be fulfilled, on earth as in heaven."

It was a conception not wanting in sublimity which regarded the fair Creation as proceeding from a few staccato fiats of rigid Omnipotence—

whereat all things rose instanter out of nothing into a large completeness. Such a conception produced in the mind the loftiest ideas of an Almightiness which could scorn all probability, and laugh, in its resistless majesty, at all impossibility. But in thus depicting a Being, exalted high above all rules and regulations, whose inscrutable Will was a law to itself—the seeming ideal was founded on non-moral despotism, where there are no laws for the monarch ; as opposed to the true ideal of moral sovereignty, where the good ruler is the most law-abiding person within his wide realm.

Doubtless there was some grandeur in ancient despotism. It built the pyramids of Egypt and the Great Wall of China, for its own glorification, by sovereign decree, through the medium of forced labour. But the highest instinct of moral civilisation has long ceased to regard such wilful absolutism as at all ideal, spite the massiveness of its mighty works. True civilisation largely consists in the substitution of moral suasion for mechanical coercion. And it is hardly conceivable that a fully moral God has ever assumed the rôle of a deified Cheops, or a self-adored Ch'in Shih Huang.

Instead of a Fiat-issuing Despot for the Creator of all things, our truer religious sense sees a Desireful Evolver, at every stage deigning to ask the co-operation of the media through which His Omni-

presence works; and having to deal in the end with living desires, still seeking to win them to harmonic accordance with His own desire, that so His work may proceed to its rightful conclusion. This view of God, suggested indeed by the "overbrooding Spirit" in the earliest Hebrew poem (celebrating God's own Poem of Creation),* satisfies the reason, and avoids many a dark incongruity.

If by the "will" of God we mean His *despotic Determination born of resistless omnipotence*, we can find no place for either the existence of evil or the freedom of human will, although both the existence of sin and our freedom to sin are quite real facts to us—so real indeed that an all-compelling God were a Being of far lesser reality to our faculty of reason.† But if by the "will" of God we mean His *sacred Desire backed by moral authority*, as attested by every enlightened conscience; Desire which has

* The literary form of Genesis i., borrowed from the ancient Mongoloid Chaldeans, is preserved by the great Mongoloid race of Chinese, and illustrated on every doorway at New Year, in the antithetical mottoes for the two side-posts. The parallelism between the tasks of days one to three, and four to six, has been pointed out by R. G. Moulton and others.

† "It seems more easy to comprehend the mental action of those whom the picture of the actual world, as it is unrolled before them, tempts, by its misery, guilt and shame, into doubt of the being of God, than of persons who can view that picture, and observe the dominant part borne by man in determining his character, and yet can make it a subject of question whether man is morally diseased."—W. E. Gladstone, *Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture.*

ever achieved its fulfilment through accordant desire, and which seeks a living accordance from human desire; if we thus regard the "will" of our God, we avoid many a difficulty of logical credence, and gain a conception of One to whom a majestic condescension to moral suasion is far more an essential attribute than the absolutism of unbending Omnipotence. Gaining thus a more humanised God, we gain one that is no less Divine. Instead of an unearthly Despot, we gain in the end a Heavenly Father—true Father of a condescending Son—whose very name, thus explained, calls forth our instinctive reverence, and loyalty, and the response of all filial desire.

It was not all blind conservatism which preserved in Chinese minds—even to the end of the nineteenth century—the ideal of an early patriarchal rule; nor all lawless revolt which has implanted in certain Western states the contrasting ideal of republicanism. The apparently opposite ideals are in essence akin. The former represents a commonwealth under a revered *pater*, the latter a commonwealth under a revered *patria*.* Both

* Pericles exhorted his hearers "to become enamoured of the State, and, when they felt its greatness, to bear in mind that their ancestors constituted it by their valour, their sense of duty, and their principle of honour in action" (Thucidides, ii. 43); and thus it would become to them a personified *Patria*, replete with moral dignity.

ideals have been cherished as a protest against arbitrary despotism, in which the desires of those who were ruled were forgotten. Earthly sovereignty, as a fact, began with actual fatherhood, whose authority was absolute, but, in the ideal clan, manifest ever as moral suasion; and all modern States aspire to a brotherhood, where law and order reign supreme, but ever as moral suasion.

The Kingdom of God embodies and perfects both these ideals. The cause of the Throne is so far identified with that of the filial populace that each one of us may pray: "Our Father in heaven, let *our* kingdom, *my* kingdom come." The cause of Christ, as supreme Brother of the race, becomes so far the cause of the whole brotherhood that each may follow the constraining impulse of his higher self. To all true citizens it seems a State of Grace, rather than Law. The compelling "Thou *must*" of the Law of righteousness has become the permissive "Thou *mayest*" of the Gospel—"whosoever will *may*" live the life of godliness in Him that strengtheneth thereto. And all this, with no suspension of Regal executive against ungodliness in its finally intractable stages.

The dynamic forces of despotism may seem to be greater than those of moral suasion—in all but moral regions. Forces proceeding from one iron will require the consent of no other will to make

them effective; whereas the forces of moral suasion always require the coincidence of desiring hearts, to achieve anything. But in moral regions, the former powers, in their non-moral form, are reduced to nil; while in the latter case there is sure to be a percentage of true moral response. For it is of the primal nature of sentient beings to yield in the end to reasonable suasion, and only an acquired second-nature to withhold to the end all hearty compliance.

That this second nature has been acquired by certain beings in the universe, and by men of earth under their beguilement, is a tenet most deeply impressed on the convictions of most Scripture-writers, and wrought into the religious consciousness of men in most of the ancient faiths of earth. And facts as we know them would seem to afford a sad and sufficient corroboration.

It is obvious that in the visible human family there are forces of godless desire, which, on occasion, may become rampant, to the man's undoing. The case suggests unseen inciters to revolt against the broad scheme of sacred Desire, which the conscience approves as "good and perfect and acceptable," but from which human desire so often turns aside. Men become evil, apparently, in response to desires not originally, or entirely, their own, but eventually adopted as their own; for

no young heart sets for itself, from the first, a definite goal of badness. The heart seems to yield, by easy stages, to a scheme of evil complete in a mind wider than its own. For at least three millenniums both West and East Asian peoples have been firmly convinced of the power of unseen seducers to evil. It has been under the benign influence of Christian environment, with the bliss of a strangely near-sighted ignorance, that certain good-natured men have tried to discount the badness of evil, and have denied the existence of an unseen evil one.

On the badness of moral evil, a non-Christian Chinese newspaper * once made the following statement: "The earnest student of history sees the black stream of evil moving irresistibly down the ages, millions and millions of men and women, and even children, helplessly engulfed in its loathsome filth; horrid idols instead of the beautiful God; woman the slave of man instead of his companion; a man lecherous and lustful; woman cowed and ill-tempered; the shallow philosophy of the world instead of the deep teaching of Heaven; the tyranny of fear and superstition instead of the liberty of the truth; slavery of passion instead of an overcoming mastery; wickedness entrenched in ancient times—in laws, in languages, in social sys-

* The *Nan Fang Pao* (bi-linguial), Shanghai, May 20, 1906; an article in English.

tems, in religious forms—fortified by the prestige of thousands of years of history. . . . The vision of evil may well appal the bravest soul." And surely such remarks proceed from an enlightened consciousness.

As to the prime mover in it all: Jesus, without shifting human responsibility to unseen regions, has given His explanation of these sombre facts by saying: "An enemy hath done this" (Matt. xiii. 28). And His words concerning sickness, or non-moral evil (Luke xiii. 16), identify that as the work of Satan also.

Pondering His words, and "granting that somewhere in the history of the universe, a being of vast potency and exalted intelligence came into deadly conflict with creative power, we should expect that the conflict would be carried on in both physical and moral spheres." There would be an attempt to introduce mal-adjustments into the material world, and into the physical life of man, as well as into his relations to his God. "The existence of such a power as Satan is sufficient to account for all these phenomena." *

Neither cosmic evils, nor physical diseases, nor moral badness, ever found a place in the desires of the Eternal. And when we grieve for the woes of the world and ask statedly, as we do half-unconsciously: "Is this the best that a good God

* See *Evil and Evolution*, Macmillan, pp. 232–3.

could do for the creation and for us ? " the answer comes back to us : " It is the best that God could do—under the circumstances." For He has never had His own way fully in His mundane creation. His workmanship, ever a poem of lovely completeness when unresisted, has all along been tampered with by non-accordant desires. And the faculty of desire is not one that He would crush down, for only in its pacific conquest lie any possibilities of true moral value.

The universe then is everywhere pervaded with the desires of God—always on the side of upbuilding ; and also in part pervaded with the desires of certain " principalities and powers " opposed to God, and ever on the side of disintegration. In the midst is poised the soul of man, as between two magnetic centres, with the faculty of self-inclination towards the one or the other. From either of these he may gain, by his inclination towards that magnetism, some dynamic ruling force —either godly or satanic. And further, there seems within him a definite bias towards the wrong sort of magnetism, for he need not pray earnestly in order to become a moral failure.* To cease to

* Compare the lines of Dryden (*Hind and Panther*, part iii.) :

" Two magnets, heaven and earth, allure to bliss ;
The larger loadstone one, the nearer this ;
The weak attraction of the greater fails,
We nod awhile, but neighbourhood prevails."

worship and pray will often suffice for this. To follow passion rather than principle, to "be one's own master" for long together, is sufficient in the end to afford a playground for the whole forces of hell. Habitual "neglect of salvation," habitual lapse from known law in minor concerns, may emasculate all powers of higher self-rule, and bring about a riot of lawless impulses against which all nobler desire is well-nigh powerless.

Yet, happily, if God's desires only gain true dynamic force in a fully accordant medium, the desires of Satan are at first void of effect in the absence of human accordance. And though there is ever a great contrast between the amount and quality of force requisite to destroy any fair handiwork, and the amount and quality of force necessary to reconstruct it, yet when God's desires become fully dynamic in the prayer of penitence, the true omnipotence of God receives practical verification, as in that law of the moral realm: "where sin abounded, there Grace abounds more exceedingly." And as there had been a real tyranny of disintegrating forces, so now there is founded within the man an actual reign of rightful and righting forces, from the sovereign potency of the Spirit of God-in-Christ. Such was the discovery which a prayerful apostle once made for

himself (Rom. v. 20–21, viii. 2),* and which many of his contemporaries and his later readers have made for themselves also.

And further, in the case of cosmic disturbance or maladjustment, and all satanic tribulation whatever, God still shines forth as the great Over-ruler, transforming these evils into beneficent discipline to all loving hearts attuned to His own, that so they may gain the good most prized by Him, and by them—a growing beatitude of God-relatedness, based on the ineffable relatedness of the ideal Son of God (Rom. viii. 28-9).

No thoughtful man can look, without some stirrings of awe, upon the downward and upward possibilities of our nature. Many centuries before Christ, the Hebrews quoted certain abandoned characters as "sons of belial," which phrase, on the lips of Jesus, became "sons of their father, the devil." And over against this we have the Hebrew phrase "sons of God" applied, in the book of Job, to the angels; and then by Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, to men who exhibit some quality of God-likeness. And either phrase carries the mind into regions of which it can only

* "He does not argue this subject in a speculative temper; he is not academic; he is not primarily a logician, a metaphysician, a philosopher; he is an impressionist graphically recording the fact and power of grace as an indisputable experience."—W. L. Watkinson, "On the Art of Preaching," June 13, 1911.

attempt to define the nearer and more patent aspects.

In the corners of old maps of the world of the fifteenth century are great vague spaces without shape or name, on which are written three words: *Hic sunt leones.* Such dark corners are there also in man. Passions grow and growl somewhere within us, and we may say of an obscure portion of our souls—there are lions there.* "There are depths in man that go the length of the lowest hell, as there are heights that reach highest heaven—everlasting miracle and mystery that man is." † In every one of us we recognise the rudiments of evil forces that have produced the whole of the human problem; for there is something of all men in every man. Remove from us the protection, the encompassing safeguards and shelters we enjoy; withdraw the influences for good that are daily dropt on us like gentle dew from heaven; deprive us of the comforts and interests, the innocent substitutes for forbidden pleasures; expose us to the loneliness, the vacancy, the dreary monotony, and hopeless struggle, the despair in which many who fall have found themselves immersed; and bring to us, thus exposed and bereft, what temptation you will—uncleanness,

* Victor Hugo, *By Order of the King*, p. 199.
† Carlyle, *French Revolution*, III. 1, iii.

intemperance, theft, lying, blasphemy—and probably not one in ten of ordinary Christian people, certainly few except the statedly prayerful, would stand before it.*

We must rise above nature, or we shall sink far below it. To the dark side of ancient Roman life, in its opulence and depravity; or of modern city slum life, in its penury and vice; or of paganism abroad, in its malodorous squalor of character; we apply the terms "brutal and beastly," as the ugliest epithets we possess. But there is an element missing in the passions of "brute beasts" which may become evident when passions are rampant in man. The latter are not only "earthly" and "sensual," but become actually "devilish" (James iii. 15). The desires of the evil one become dynamic in man, to an altogether fiendish degree.

Yet, in man's capacities to render dynamic the desires of Satan—to the actual embodiment of the monstrous, abysmal, and hellish—we gain an argument for his capacity to render dynamic the desires of God, in actual embodiment of the noble, and lovely, and heavenly. For all reason forbids us to regard an evil one as the chief potency in the universe.

Nature, with all its occasional maladjustments,

* R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, p. 7.

reveals a Power of vast construction, far more than one of destruction ; a Power tending to beauty and harmony, far more than one tending to the reverse of these things. And if there be any capacity in sky and sea, in hills and rivulets, in undulating plains and placid lakes, in trees and flowers and cereals, to manifest forth Creative desires towards beauty and usefulness, we cannot believe that there are no possibilities in man of excelling these objects of Nature, in a special manifestation of Redemptive grace and gracefulness.* Given the Gospel on God's side, and penitent faith on man's side ; given prayer and a whole infinitude of Divine desires capable of actualisation through prayer ; then we cannot believe that there are no possibilities in our human nature of rising much higher heavenward than many on earth have fallen hellward. As there are capabilities of yielding to a destructive spiritual power, so there are also of yielding to a vastly superior constructive Power, with results comparable to the greatness and beneficence of that Power Supreme. If Satan "enters into" certain men of prayerless lives, other men—nay, the same men at another time—through the Gospel of Christian Faith and Prayer may become "filled unto all the fulness of God." And the world has seen some

* The basal idea in *charis*, or "grace," is gracefulness.

of these higher possibilities actualised in all generations.

To what Alpine heights of holiness certain men of prayer have risen, may lie beyond our cognisance. But what righteousness and goodness certain prayerful souls have embodied and rendered dynamic, we are happily in a position to recognise. Not that words can sum up the case analytically. We can never analyse Nature at her best, nor true Art inspired by the mystic Innermost of Nature. We may analyse certain elements, just as in botany we may describe the stamens, pistil, calyx, corolla, and all the rest of it; but the living flower—the harmonious whole—shines forth as a thing mysterious, ineffable.

Villany is more picturesque than piety, as being more capable of graphic description, with less artistic painstaking. A brigand may make a more striking figure in a drama than the noblest of God's own saints. Yet the dynamic power of the latter character, to those in contact with it, has often been greater, if less obvious, than that of the former. The sphere of the former is in patent circumstance, the sphere of the latter is in unseen soul-influence. The former may lend itself to dramatic portrayal, the latter is enshrined in the hearts of men, among things too deep for detailed utterance. The life and prayers

of the latter "sweep gradual gospels in," perhaps intangibly, as the breath of springtide on the frost-bound soil, but potently nevertheless, when men give themselves leisure to reflect on the difference it has made to them.

The author of *De Profundis*, writing from his prison-house, says: "One of the most beautiful personalities I have ever known was a woman whose sympathy and noble kindness to me have been beyond power of description; she is the one who has really assisted me, though she does not know it, more than any one else in the world has, and all through the mere fact of her existence, through her being what she is—partly an ideal and partly an influence: a suggestion of what one might be, as well as a real help to becoming it; a soul that renders the common air sweet, and makes what is spiritual seem as natural as the sunlight on the sea." And there are few of us but have known men and women here and there, midst the scenes of daily life, in full contact with earthly concerns, upon whose lives there has shone a light so obviously supernatural, that we have been set wondering what is the vision of which the reflection has been so radiant. Their unobtrusive appeal to us has often been of an intangible order. But, as we try to define it, we know that there has been something within them related to the freshness of

the dawn, the stability of the hills, the fragrance of flowers; it has been that music which audible music strives to express,—

> The harmony of human souls
> With heaven's eternal melody.

Instinctively and almost unconsciously we have studied those lives. We have found that Christ has been to them a grand solidity, so fully grasped in some days of trial and anguish that they tend most naturally to make others realise Him; and that to them prayer has become such a second nature that their very presence seems to diffuse a spirit of prayerfulness around.

In our matter-of-fact moods, we may have given full weight to heredity, and have regarded the whole as the refined product of the Christian centuries; though even thus, the poetry of such lives has been none the less God-wrought. But again, those of us who have lived abroad in a non-Christian land, for any length of time, with any closeness of intimacy with the people, have found the same transcendant glow upon some Christian characters there. We have found that the God who usually works on man through gradual evolutionary processes may also work effectively without them. For here, with no advantage from ancestry, and many a disadvantage from the moral

squalor around, there have arisen bright Christians of the first generation, in whom the Gospel of Christ and prayerfulness have wrought the same unspeakable charm as we have noted in the homelands. Truly, the surest evidence, this, of the possible uplift of human nature, through Christ and prayer, when both become daily realities.

In an age of Christian sermons in churches, and of Christian apologetics pouring from the press, we remember that the first preacher to Europe spoke of his converts as his apologetics—"living epistles, known and read of all men." And the persuasion comes home to us that, could such lives, such inspired epistles of God, as we have been noting, be multiplied sufficiently, and brought into contact with men everywhere, they would form such living "Evidences of Christianity" as to settle for ever all speculative queryings concerning the rightful place of Christ in the world, and the value of prayer in the ennobling of character. And this multiplication of radiant Christian lives is truly the goal of the preacher of modern days, who follows the prophets of old, with his fuller Gospel of Christ and His spirit of prayer.

Meanwhile, we could wish that the forces of Christian goodness, so graciously potent under conditions of near contact, might, by a further

benison Divine, be endued with projective efficacy, so as to influence men afar as well as near.

And, in the yet unmeasured potencies of prayer and supplication, may it not be that the plans of our God include this very thing also ?

THE POSSIBILITIES OF PRAYER

"How mighty, how wonderful a thing is prayer! That man has yet to appear in the world who shall prove to the utmost what prayer can accomplish."—JOHN FOSTER.

VII

THE POSSIBILITIES OF PRAYER

In these days when the writers of fiction command much larger audiences than preachers in general, and indeed constitute the only preachers that many are disposed to hear, it would be interesting to collect together the various references to prayer in the popular literature of the times. Here and there would be found material provocative of thought—sometimes in the right direction.

One such fragment, appearing in a London weekly,* is perhaps as striking as any. It may have been written with no didactic intent, and many of its readers may have given it but a passing attention, as being a merely curious fantasy. But it is based upon what would seem to be, in not a few cases, profoundest reality.

In its imaginative setting, a young medical student procures from a Hindoo a drug which, when inhaled, is said to quicken the senses, so that

* *The Saturday Westminster Gazette*, June 17, 1911. By Algernon Blackwood.

any streams of soul-influence, powerfully affecting a man, will be thereby visualised. The young man resolves to test its virtues, and, after inhaling the vapour, goes with a friend to dine at a large hotel where there is a motley gathering attracted by the Coronation festivities. A detective in plain clothes is there also, watching a man on whom the medical student also fixes his attention. The man is well dressed and poses as a gentleman, offering special attentions to a couple of country folk who seem to have money about their persons.

As the drug begins to work, the student is startled to see a line of light, golden and wavy, hovering over the man, as if trying to enter his heart. It persists, and finally succeeds in entering him. Then the man suddenly rises, abandons his quest for gain, and—to the great surprise of the detective—walks out into the night. The two friends follow him, guided by the gleam which remains vivid to one of them. It leads them to a mean neighbourhood, where it is seen streaming from the window of an attic. The quondam sharper has been attracted thither, enters the door and disappears.

They learn on inquiry that the man's father lives in that attic, bed-ridden. But, as one of the neighbours said, just praying night and day. It was the stream of his prayer-influence upon his

unworthy son which had formed that mystic light, and deterred him from evil.

Apart from all fanciful elements in the story, and the visualisation of that which could only be seen by the angels, we may ask whether there is not here, in graphic form, some hint of the actual powers of fervent intercession upon its living objects. Statements are indeed to be found in several devotional books, written by men of prayer, to the effect that: "There are Christians lying bed-ridden for years in garrets, who have been taught how to pray; and in the day of judgment it will be seen that they have done more for God and the world than some whose names are blazoned abroad as the world's greatest benefactors." * But in order to make sure of our ground we must brace ourselves for a close study of Christian prayer, and its possibilities, with the Scriptures as our starting-point.

Three words are used in the New Testament for three stages of devotional exercise: *proseuchē*, *enteuxis*, and *deēsis*, for homage, communion, petition, respectively; the first being literally "worshipping approach," the second "interview" or "heart's converse," the third "supplication," or prayer proper, whether personal or intercessory, and generally of an intense order, illustrated by a

* William J. Patton, *Pardon and Assurance*, p. 192.

reiterated banging at a closed door at night, Luke xi. 5–8 (so familiar and so aggravating to Western residents in Chinese cities, who may often call the "importunity" *impudence*, as the word literally is), and by the urgent pleadings of a wronged widow in the courtyard of an unjust or careless judge, Luke xviii. 1–8 (also only too common in the Orient); and defined by Archbishop Trench in the couplet:

> Say, what is prayer when it is prayer indeed?
> The mighty utterance of a mighty need.

The first and third terms are very frequent in the New Testament. The second term is rarely used (only in 1 Tim. ii. 1; iv. 5), but the condition it represents is assumed throughout; for what is true religion but an essential communion of life and love between the Father in heaven and His sons on earth? On the subject of sacred communion with God, Fenelon, in one of his letters, has well said: "When we love God, we do not ask what we shall say to Him. We have no difficulty in conversing with a friend. Our hearts are open to him. We do not think what we are to say to him, but say it without reflection. We cannot be reserved. Even when we have nothing to say to him, we are satisfied with being with him."

The infrequency of this term in the New Testament is sufficient indication that this sense of at-homeness with God is not (as some devout modern writers have assumed) all that is meant by prayer. The life of Jesus was one of unbroken *communion* with God, but it was also one of definite *prayerfulness*, marked full often by *strenuous supplication.*

The word *prayerfulness* most befits the use of the first of our terms ; as in the exhortation " Pray without ceasing," where a constant output of strenuous supplication would be incompatible with the energy and attention demanded by the crowding cares of life. A further exhortation, combining the first and third terms, may be rendered : " With all (quiet) *prayerfulness* and (fervent) *supplication, approaching God* at all times in the Spirit, and watching thereto in all perseverance, with *intercessory supplication* " (Eph. vi. 18). The phrase which we have for the moment condensed into " intercessory supplication " is really " supplication for all the saints." But, as we remember, Christian intercession on behalf of gracious souls knit with our own in sacred kinship, is part of a much wider enterprise. Our Lord has commanded His disciples : " Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you " (Matt. v. 44). Finally, there is to be intercession for the

establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth (Matt. vi. 10; Luke xi. 2), and the welfare of all men everywhere (1 Tim. ii. 1).

Here then we have certain specimen exhortations concerning prayer to God, whether personal or intercessory, in a volume which so often asserts, and everywhere assumes, that such prayer is of great importance and efficacy. Let us ask, what may seem to be an exceedingly rudimentary question: "How came those utterances to be made? By what process were these speakers and writers led to adopt their definite conclusions as to its importance and efficacy?" For, with or without any direct inspiration from God, all philosophical conclusions involve mental processes, and these conclusions as to the value of prayer are distinctly philosophical conclusions, if in a sacred region.

There are two methods by which thinkers arrive at conclusions concerning the value of any course of action—as, for instance, the value of a certain course of medical treatment. In the attempted formation of a medical gospel for human maladies, an old method favoured by Aristotle was really that of *deduction*. It was non-experimental. It consisted in inferences and conclusions deduced from certain ideas, which were taken as logical premisses. And had those principles been in-

controvertible, and those inferences wise ones, the Greeks might have possessed a worthy medical system. Unfortunately the reverse was the case, for those so-called principles were often wide of reality, and the deductions were valueless.* Yet, given axiomatic principles, and clear deductions, the *deductive method* is of great use—as in mathematics, and some other regions of philosophy.

In modern medical science, from its early dawn in the time of Galen, there has been a growing tendency, as in all scientific research, to follow the lines of the *inductive method.* In science generally this method received its definite initiation under Galileo, and its full elaboration under Newton. In its simplest form it consists in " ascending from particulars to general principles, and then descending from those general principles to particular applications." † The former method starts with what (to certain minds) appears to be reality in the region of abstract truth ; the latter with what we have ascertained to be real in the region of solid fact. The former method starts with intuitions, the latter with careful experiment.

As children, we were all inductive philosophers, if from a narrow range of experiment. Having

* As that argument of Aristotle that " the heart being the centre of emotion, it must be the centre of the nervous system, and the brain a mere sponge to cool it."

† Lyell.

burnt our fingers at the fire, we gained the general principle that fire burns fingers and were swift to " descend from that general principle to particular applications " when we saw a yet younger child playing with fire.

Adult men, of old time, discovered that on several occasions when they were somewhat out of health, the visit of a cheerful friend, or some amusing diversion, tended to uplift them out of their poorliness. From this they gained the general principle that " a merry heart is a good medicine "—which thus became a proverb for any particular application.

In like manner, the writers of Scripture, or the speakers they report, upon the subject of prayer to God, were followers of a true, if rudimentary, scientific method. The process in their minds was from cumulative fact to universal principle—as many a passage in the Psalms indicates. There was in their case need, experiment, result; then further need, experiment, result. Then, from similarity of result following numerous experiments, they arrived at broad generalisations embodying great principles, which formed a definite basis for their exhortations to prayer. There was personal experience behind every syllable.

The Lord Jesus Himself would hardly start, as a young child, with a ready-made body of divinity.

He would learn the efficacy of prayer to His Father by actual praying. Taught by a godly mother, and instructed in the Scriptures, all deductions from others' experience might find instant credence within Him; but doubtless all these discoveries were re-discovered by Him before He proclaimed them with personal authority. It was from "worshipping approach" to God, from "heart's converse" with God, from fervent "supplication" to God, through the immanent Spirit of God, that Jesus gained His unflinching assurance. And so also with the apostles who followed Him.

The process by which psalmists and prophets, the child Jesus and the apostles, arrived at their conclusions with regard to prayer, is also the process by which the godly of all succeeding ages have arrived at theirs. Take an utterance from a letter written at the beginning of the eighteenth century: "Should you feel at times disheartened and discouraged, a confiding thought, a simple movement of heart toward God will renew your power." It would not require a committee of experts to determine that this advice, if given in full sincerity, was given by a man who himself was accustomed to receive ready answers to his petitions, offered from a basis of habitual prayerfulness; and that in the friend to whom he wrote he recognised one with

whom prayerfulness was no novel condition. Otherwise, he would scarcely have represented the conditions of Divine enheartening and enabling as being so simple and easy. The words are those of Fenelon, "the good archbishop," who, in his later years especially, lived hard by the Mercy Seat open to all believers, where all difficulties of circumstance, and all ecclesiastical divergences, may be forgotten in the streaming generosity of the Regal Father. He may possibly have recalled to mind the words of a psalmist: "In the day that I called Thou answeredst me, Thou didst encourage me with strength in my soul." But whether or not, the advice he gives so confidently was doubtless based upon many an experience similar to that recorded of old.

From all this there arise two considerations.

The first is that the long line of assertions and exhortations concerning godly prayer, from the Old Testament centuries on to modern days, being the outcome of personal experience of its remedial value, present as a whole a basis of evidence as great as that which existed for the remedial virtues of such a medicine as quinine, and caused it to be registered on our national Pharmacopeia, while yet (in the absence of bacteriological research) its process of action was mostly unknown. How it acted in cases of ague was open to conjec-

ture. That it did act in such cases was settled for ever.

The second is that, encouraged by the cumulative testimony of numberless witnesses throughout the ages, it is ours to add personal experiment that we may gain similar experiences and assurance. For it is not enough to believe on testimony the general fact that godly prayer avails; we must be assured for ourselves that "My prayer avails with God," if we are to gain anything from a philosophy of prayer. In all practical matters there is no argument equal to that of personal verification. In prayer there is no assurance like that of the man who can say for himself: "I sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears."

When once we have added our personal verification, and taken our place in the ranks of the noble army of witness-bearers, we may then venture to approach the more inward philosophy of the matter, by asking, in all reverence, How and Why prayer is efficacious. And in this research we may be guided by irrefrangible principles as to the nature of God, readily owned by all to whom a realised God has become, through "heart's converse" and "supplication,"—penitent, trustful, adoring—a definite fact in the universe.

Bringing to a focus some of the considerations

discussed in the foregoing pages, we find the following bases for a philosophy of prayer:

(1) God is the Reality of realities. Behind all matter there is His eternal Solidity, behind all force there is His eternal Power, behind all natural law there is His eternal Reliability; behind all moral law there is His eternal Justice, behind all earthly kindness and winsomeness there is His eternal Love and Loveliness, behind all human relations there is His own intimate Relatedness to us. When we utter the word *God*, we mean all these conceptions combined in one supreme Personality. God can never be less than God. And in His relations to us in Christ, He cannot be less than our Father, Redeemer, Enabler.

(2) God is the Inspirer of every godly prayer. It is the outcome of His own earnest desire. And for an earnest desire of God, a prayer of God (as we may call it), to have been ardently adopted by us, so that we pray earnestly to Him, means that the prayer has already assumed a dynamic potency. Directed from God to us, it has met with a dynamic response within us, and returning from us to God, to lay hold of His might, it gains a condition of large efficiency. It gathers in one some forces of God and man, and those forces being set free in certain directions, must achieve some result in those directions, wherever there are any elements of responsiveness.

The prayer from God, to which we add our own sacred energies, born of the Spirit of God in willing hearts, is directed toward either the improvement of our own character, the characters of others, or the amelioration of circumstances,—which latter may involve the persuasion of some human mind towards a desirable end ; and so far as there are elements of responsiveness in either of these directions, we have in godly prayer a dynamic force of achievement.

If the objective be the improvement of our own character, then persevering prayer to God manifestly contains in itself the promise of success. If the objective be the improvement of character in others, or their being brought nearer to God and therefore more recipient of Divine blessedness —where the arousal of Godward desire, and the bestowal of godly energy are both involved—then, given due perseverance, our prayer may conceivably be a potent aid toward those results. If the objective be the amelioration of circumstances—where the elements to be influenced are of an intricate order—then, as far as those elements are receptive of spiritual influence, our prayer may be a force of harmonising efficacy. In this latter case, the precise result we desire may not be attained ; but such are the resources of our God that, if not what we desired, then some better

thing than that which we contemplated will be secured. For, having gained the accordant prayer of man, "God has a thousand keys to open a thousand doors for the deliverance of His own, when it has come to the greatest extremity." * And so, in all prayers for the betterment of circumstances, we, having urged our case, must ever leave it to our Father to follow His own larger desires—which we may well do with grateful confidence.

In all things, *true prayer is the winning of our ardent desires by God, and their transmutation by the Spirit of God into forces of sacred potency*; and thus it is a means toward the attainment of those Divine desires which we have made our own.

Should this outline of a philosophy of prayer commend itself as a whole, there may be added various considerations for the elucidation of certain details involved—as the influencing of minds and hearts at a distance through intercession for them. But if, from inexperience in the practice of fervent supplication, and its assured results, we do not all at once grasp the main inferences thus summarised, it may be urged that such inferences are far more in accordance with the nature of things divine and spiritual than either of

* Rutherford.

the following theories, which are sometimes quoted instead.

1. That God in His majesty has adopted a real or apparent aloofness from the desires of men, and needs to be persuaded by our prayers, if they are to be effective.

This is a theory based upon the majestic aloofness which Oriental potentates have assumed in regard to the populace they govern. Such sovereigns have been unapproachable by any but high officials, and those officials in their turn have required much force of suasion, not unattended with gifts, from the populace, in order to yield their attention to any suppliant. But it would be impossible to prove that our Heavenly Father has ever assumed such an aloofness from any of His children, however ungodly they might have become.

2. That godly prayer has its starting-point in the mind of man rather than in the heart of God. That it is a simple request and nothing more. And that, the request having been once made, it is almost impertinent and argues a lack of faith in God to add any reiteration to the request; for where there is willingness on the part of God, the shorter the prayer the better.

This theory is based on the facts (*a*) that some so-called prayers are selfish petitions, entirely devoid of Divine inspiration; (*b*) that prayer *in*

its outer form is necessarily an offering of requests; (*c*) and that certain tautological babblings of the heathen, and certain long prayers of the hypocrites —supposed to be meritorious from quantity apart from all quality—were naturally condemned by Jesus. But this theory, though virtually held by many superficial minds, as a deterrent from either strenuous prayer or persevering prayer, is far too wide a generalisation from the facts just quoted; and is utterly discredited by the numerous exhortations to forcefulness in prayer (sometimes to prayer of an "agonising" order, as in Rom. xv. 30) found in the Scriptures, and to perseverance in prayer, in the living examples recorded, from the story of "wrestling Jacob" onwards. Jesus Himself prayed earnestly, and sometimes all night, to His Father. He gave no countenance to "run-away knocks at Heaven's door," but taught that the Model Prayer itself was to be prayed with the dogged persistency of a man banging hard at a closed door at night, until it is opened (Luke xi. 5–8); a prolonged muscular exercise which, when heard close at hand in the Orient, forms for ever afterwards the most telling illustration that could be chosen of literal "shamelessness."

Remembering that the Model Prayer was given by Jesus as God's deputy on earth, that it is indeed God's prayer in man—there must be some reasons

why its petitions are to be prayed thus forcefully, and with such an output of persistent energy. For there is no resistance with God, as there is in a sleepy neighbour. God must have some use for human prayer-energy which has been inspired by Himself. He has use for preaching-energy, we know, in bringing His Gospel home to men's hearts. And not only for the outward forms of that energy—as declaration, exposition, exhortation—but for the inner soul-energy which true Gospel-preaching demands. And so here, in the absence of all visible and audible forms of energy, the Most High finds use for the sacred inaudible outflow of godly soul-energy, or prayer-force itself, towards bringing about results desired alike by Himself and the man who is praying.

3. That, in ancient language, everything being foreordained by the decrees of Heaven, no prayer can have any objective result. We meet with this supposition in the epic of Virgil (A. 6,376):

> No longer dream that human prayer
> The will of Fate can overbear.*

But, in the New Testament, we find comparatively little mention of the *determinate counsel* of God, and very much concerning the *desire* of God, and notably His desire that we should offer godly prayer with assurance of result—an assurance

* Destine fata Deum flecti sperare precando.

which, as a fact, ever grows with growing habits of prayerfulness.

4. That, in modern language, there is such a rigid fixity of *law* in the universe, that no outflow of prayer (as distinct from communion with God) can avail in any wise.

Many, indeed, regard the Almighty as a modern pope, deprived of His temporal power, and barely allowed, out of traditional respect, to inhabit His Vatican above. But as the laws which restrict His operations are quoted seriously enough, it is well to consider the case with all seriousness.

In doing so, we should fix our minds on the region of *force* rather than on the region of *law*, unless we mean moral law or mathematical law—where the word " law " may be used in its absolute sense. The common phrase " physical law " stands for a definite *regularity of method* in the exercise of natural force ; which regularity might be quite undeviating were there no *re-direction of force* from the actions of living beings, but may be subject to certain variations under the impact of their activities.

To use a term as ambiguous as that of " physical law,"—" Every action of human free-will is a *miracle* to physical and chemical science," as Lord Kelvin once said. Not that such actions abrogate any real *law* in the universe, but are wont to pro-

duce a re-direction of force, in defiance of the customary routine. And so human will or desire—and presumably Divine will or desire—must be reckoned with as a factor in the general exercise of natural force. For the forces of Nature, ordinarily working in a certain routine, may be set working in ways that are extraordinary, at the will of any being who has learned to use them as his servants.

We can, at our will, turn heat into driving-power, and driving-power into electricity, and electricity into light-force; or we can employ either of these forms of natural force for our purposes, in many novel and wonderful ways. We can even perform the "miracle" of making heat productive of cold (a common task in tropical climates), by turning heat into driving-power, and setting that power to make great blocks of ice.

The little child of a practical scientist is likely to set too narrow limits to his father's abilities to modify physical conditions. And we little children of a Heavenly Father may very easily—in our ignorant pride of knowledge—set too narrow limits to His power of re-directing the forces of Nature; although His power to do so may be normally of wide range, and the liberty He allows Himself in the use of that power may be great indeed, when once He gains for His use the new

factor of human prayer-energy. With that new energy—born of the impact of the Divine and the human—in full exercise, it is more than possible that a new vista of opportunity is opened up; affording ample room, in the scheme of the universe, for the outgoings of "special Providence." And the burden of proof must lie with the prayerless deniers, rather than with the praying ones who believe in prayer.

5. That the only results from prayer are influences personally received, although the prayer may be of an intercessory nature.

It is an undoubted fact that we cannot pray for the blessedness of others without receiving some personal blessedness from our altruistic prayers. As Samuel Rutherford says in one of his letters: "I have been helped by praying for others, for by making an errand to God for them, I have got something for myself." He never assumes, however, nor do the Scriptures ever suggest, that no remedial good for others is attained by intercession for them. The extreme case of intercession for others is intercession for our enemies, or for those whom we have good reason to dislike. And here the personal results are especially valuable. As William Law puts it: "There is nothing so makes us love a man as praying for him; and when you can do this sincerely for any man, you have fitted

your soul for the performance of everything that is kind and civil toward him." Thus, were there no hope of any objective answer to the prayer: "God bless him who is not my friend," the friendly spirit induced in our own hearts by that prayer would make it no vain exercise. But here again, the exhortation to pray thus is from Jesus as God's Deputy, and no one can pray for his enemies apart from the most direct Divine prompting—for it is "against the grain" of human nature to do so. Then, as St. Cyprian argues: "Will not God grant us the blessings that He Himself commands us to ask for?"

Is there not a dynamic value in intercessory prayer, as regards the person we pray for?

At the least, the prayer of our Lord for His enemies: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," may have averted condign punishment upon them, at a time when there were manifestations of God's just displeasure in physical regions. But, reading on in the Gospel story, we find that many of those who were responsible for the death of Jesus were brought to repentance, some fifty days later, and received actual forgiveness; which objective result was surely included in that divinely benevolent prayer. And the earlier prayer for that well-meaning but uncertain man Simon Peter, though subject to a

temporary check from his comparative prayerlessness, received in the end a large response in his steadfast leadership of the apostolic band, in the Pentecostal campaign and afterwards.

In both cases, those prayed for soon learned to pray effectively for themselves. It is of the nature of fire to kindle. And the accumulated results of intercessory prayer go far to establish the fact that prayer for others tends to make them "catch the flame" of prayerfulness. It is of the nature of electricity to induce electricity. And prayer for others tends to induce prayer within them. Should the reader have had long experience, either as the offerer or the object (or both) of very definite intercessory prayer, these last sentences will surely call forth his instant corroboration.

Referring once more to the New Testament, our sacred text-book of devotion, composed of the records or utterances of men who were eminently practised in the art of supplication, we read: "Brethren, pray for us that the word of God may run and be glorified, even as it is with you" (2 Thess. iii. 1); which would be meaningless if interpreted as: "Brethren, pray for us, that in doing so your souls may be filled with sacred altruism." The writer evidently anticipated some dynamic assistance from the prayers he asks for, and an added dynamic result in the souls which

he and his comrades were hoping to influence for God. Was he not asking for *definite prayer-force*, from a distance, to aid his own ?

And that exalted prayer, taught with the emphasis of loving command : " Thy Kingdom come . . . as in heaven so on earth," surely means far more than the enhanced citizenship and patriotism of the particular subjects of the King who offer that petition. It anticipates some dynamic result upon human lives and affairs not yet subjected to the Divine rulership. But in that case—as there is no persuasion of God to be affected, for the prayer in question most certainly embodies His own desires—any objective result of such a prayer would seem to involve *a definite projection of prayer-force*, some of it to a distance from the place where the prayer is offered.

Of the projective powers of mind to a distance, modern psychology, if as yet with some measure of hesitancy, is beginning to teach us somewhat. It is understood that the projection of thought or intelligence, where it is quoted on good authority, needs clearly the most favourable conditions for its exercise. For many a pair of minds, attuned in fullest sympathy, have no record of the receipt of any thought or intelligence, the one from the other, when separated by distance. Yet no scientist would affirm such a projection of thought

to be an impossibility—however impossible wireless telegraphy, between a pair of sympathetic instruments, would have seemed to our grandfathers. Those who have studied the subject most deeply, regard it as a rare, but well-attested phenomenon ; whatever may be the uninvestigated *something* that is projected as the vehicle of thought or intelligence.

In more sacred regions, there are abundant records of a new impulse towards prayer, or an enhanced power to pray, during the moments that a praying soul, however distant in body, is pouring forth his intercessory prayers, with full earnestness, for one's spiritual welfare or efficiency. In the case of the writer, it has been worth all the sense of soul-isolation which has marked many of the days of half a lifetime, away in China, to be able to testify to this recurrent fact—as definite as any other fact of consciousness, and verified, as to synchronisation, by many a careful comparison of notes ; and to have met with men and women of half a score of nationalities, who have testified to similar facts, as vivid to them as many have been to himself.

As this subject, so familiar to many, may be new ground to others, it may be affirmed more in detail (*a*) that were two or three friends, of sympathetic unitedness, but resident in different places,

to try the experiment of conveying, each to the others, by concentration of thought, or will-power, the intelligence of any striking events that might happen to each of them—such as a disaster or a deliverance from peril, a great disappointment or an inrush of abounding joy—the results of such experiments might probably be nil. Were a striking event unexpected, it might happen without any intelligence being conveyed to the other friends; were it expected by them, there might be gained the impression that it had happened, when it had not taken place at all; or if expected and actually happening, the time of its happening might probably be wrongly recorded by those at a distance. In short, the transfer of thought and intelligence to a distance, where it can be proven, seems to require such special psychological conditions in the sender and the recipient, that these conditions are not readily fulfilled by ordinary men and women in the normal ways of life. But (*b*) that where there are two or three Christian friends, of any sympathetic unitedness, resident in different places, each of them more or less given to prayer—when either of them prays earnestly for the others at a given time, those others, with no previous intimation of that time, will normally be conscious, at that time, of a special power to pray, sometimes sufficiently notable to be set down as "a

time of prayer-glow." They may not all at once connect that "prayer-glow" with the fact of prayer being offered for them, and only by accident may they learn afterwards that prayer was then offered; but if the experiences on both sides be recorded (as they have been repeatedly by some friends at a distance), it will be found that certain times of special power to pray have coincided with times of special prayer for them by one of their number—or perchance by others, as in a prayer-meeting, of which they may afterwards receive intelligence.

Multiplied experiences of this sort, from many souls in many lands, more than suggest that *intercessory prayer of an ardent sort is normally attended with the projection of spiritual force, which may be called prayer-force*; that it defies all distance, and, in cases of receptive quietude, or of special need, may often be recognised by the recipient in the form of a definite spiritual glow, which may be termed *prayer-glow*, during which the recipient's whole faculties may receive a definite impulse, and in which his faculty of prayer will be vastly enhanced. Should the person prayed for be of a not un-prayerful disposition, the prayer-force thus projected will normally be sufficient to ignite his soul to definite fervour of prayerfulness; and in the case of another soul of a non-prayerful

disposition, there will be a tendency to influence him toward a like result. The former case may be likened to the impact of fire upon dry fuel, as his condition is already that of

> An altar heaped, and waiting for the blaze;

the latter to the impact of fire upon damper fuel, which the fire tends first to dry, and then to ignite. And remembering that any soul that is raised to the point of prayerfulness is a soul in which God's own "prayer" is already more than half successful, we may find, on such lines, a feasible explanation of the value of intercessory prayer, on behalf of those aloof from God-in-Christ, as well as those whose lives, on the whole, are in a condition of harmonious touch with His majestic grace.

A president of the British Association once said (1901): "To be satisfactory, a theory must be of a kind such as it were impossible to imagine any other which agreed equally with the facts of experiment." And the fourth rule of Newton's *Principia* reads: "In experimental philosophy, propositions collected by induction from phenomena are to be regarded as true, or very nearly true, . . . till other phenomena occur, by which they are made more accurate, or are rendered subject to exception."

Not only does our explanation meet the case, but no other explanation would seem to do so And the only exceptions to what we regard as the projection of prayer-force to a distance seem to be those where there is an absence of forceful earnestness in prayers of which the words are intercessory. The inflow of a new power to pray, in the person prayed for, may be regarded as a sure phenomenon wherever there is due fervour in the prayer of spiritual intercession. And in the case of an inertia of prayerlessness to be overcome in that person, the continuance of intercessory prayer may ever be attended with hope of overcoming at last.

To vary the simile of damp fuel, physicists recognise what is called "latent heat." To convert a block of ice into water, of the same temperature as the ice, means a large inflow of heat that seems for long resultless as regards temperature-raising. But let the inflow of heat be continued, and the temperature will most surely rise in time. Such is the case in the task of raising a prayerless soul to prayerfulness, by means of intercessory prayer. The perseverance so often urged in the Scriptures has to be exercised. And never hopelessly. We are to "despair of no man" (Luke vi. 35, R.V. marg.).

The subjective and objective efficiency of inter-

cessory prayer—the latter in connection with angelic ministry—is suggested in the lines:

> Heaven hath a balsam here too—pray for love
> For thee and thy offender; virtue rare
> Hath ardent supplication; and above,
> Swift messengers of peace are prompt to bear
> From heart to heart the generous thoughts that move
> The hardest, e'en as ice in sunny air.*

We know not what silent offices the angels of God may perform in the matter of human prayer. And it were a loss to rule them out of our imaginations, for Christendom has ever gained from the conception of these stalwart ones on high who have learned to excel in gentle ministries, exalting the lowliest deed by the might of divinest motive. We must needs be content with the prospect of knowing more of our exalted allies and their beautiful life-tasks one day, when there will be no risk of yielding to the attendants of the Highest the homage that belongs to Him alone.

But meanwhile we may assuredly subscribe to a saying of William Law: "That man is an angel, enclosed in flesh and blood, who longs, in the spirit of prayer, to have the life of God brought forth in him." For a praying soul, ablaze with God, is indeed a ministering spirit possessed of powers which even the angel of the Throne might envy.

* G. S. Gautley.

The lowest types of life on earth—the various bacteria—have been isolated and studied, until their nature is known. How fascinating it would be, could we but isolate and study that highest type of life on earth—an interceding soul aglow with the forces of God!

Not that the fullest knowledge could dissipate the inherent mystery, or that, were full knowledge attained, it could all be expressed in prosaic formulæ. For as the peaks of the Alps and the Rockies, in their grand solidity, soar far above much ordinary cloudland, so the simple matter-of-fact of an interceding soul is essentially more poetic than poverty itself.

The genius of poesy, with all its artistry of rhythmic syllables, lies in its lovelier suggestions of the Ideal, which everywhere in God's realm enwraps the Actual. It is an advance upon analytic prose, but may fall as far short of the divine Ideality as statistics fall short of poetry. The artist in words is as a pen-and-ink draughtsman—whose simple curved line has to do justice, not only to the contour but the glowing majesty of a dawn-lit cloud; not only for the curvature, but the texture and living bloom of a maiden's cheek. The best reality far transcends the artistry, even when its perfection of utmost suggestiveness has been reached.

Great human qualities have been suggested in artistic personification. Statues have been made which, being set up in public places, have been recognised by the multitude as those of Courage, Wisdom, Compassion, and the like. But those godlike qualities, in their matter-of-fact reality, are of a region of higher preciousness than that of the noblest works of brush and chisel. They have been deified, with some much-admired personage as their symbol; Odin and Minerva were ancient deifications of qualities once found in a certain warrior and a certain princess of old, each of whom being once as real a person as was the Virgin Mary—to whom so many still pray for compassion. The deifying instinct, wrongly exercised upon a partial reflection of the Divine, was yet right in regarding all ideal qualities on earth as essentially belonging to Heaven. Those qualities at their best in man are God's *works*, in the sense which the Greeks used the word; and we after them, when we speak of the *works* of our great authors, and painters, and poets. And a praying soul, rapt in godly intercession, is God's own masterpiece on earth.

All other mundane works of God were initiatory, preparatory. The long æons of world-building, from the etherial to the gaseous condition, from the incandescent globule to the hardened globe,

and the huge geologic periods following, with the long-dawning life which was to become consciousness, that so it might become God-consciousness, and a full acquiescence in God's own desires—these vast ages of creative Development, ay, and the intense years of a Divine Self-giving, with its costly Redemption—the whole process, so unthinkably grand and far-reaching, had for its destined climax the evolution of men and women, of plain *you* and *me*, into souls inspired—to whom the Spirit of grace and supplications should be as vital breath—who would live the life of prayer Godward, not only for themselves, but divinely for others also. This was the thing most like to the Blessed One Himself, for which He worked and waited, and worked again, with infinite skill and patience. And when, in spite of all wastage, one such masterpiece has been evolved by God, that praying soul cannot but be possessed of an essence and a capacity of effectiveness worthy of its exalted dignity.

It would seem to be related to the Divine Spirit of Yearning in somewhat the same manner as a human body is related to a human mind; its grosser substance affording the needed medium for the indwelling Desire-Spirit. If so, then what may not be the projective powers of an intercessory soul, God-saturated, and thus possessed of that

sublime Essence to Whom there is no such thing as distance anywhere! If some emanations of mind may be projected to a distance by means of material media, may not the high forces of the soul at prayer be projected on earth wherever the indwelling all-pervading Spirit of God is present?

Why should not Prayer have its achievements sung in poetry? The world possesses epics and dramas of Passion in conflict with untoward vicissitudes, its national odes in praise of martial exploits, and its wide collection of love-lyrics. But only a modest verse is to be found here and there in Christendom as a rhymed certificate of the prowess of Prayer, although its achievements belong to a region where all is poetry.

There may arise one day a genius inspired to write the poem of the Praying Soul, abroad on its errands of ministry; blessing some bed-ridden sufferer to whom the days and nights seem so long; or entering some familiar home-circle, breathing restful aspiration in chords of mystic harmony; or hovering over some fainting toiler as an angel of cheer; or companioning some desolate outsider, to whom any sort of heart-home were a vision too bright to be made for a moment his own—except when, at the touch of that praying soul, some gleams steal in unawares; or, by

Divine suggestion, in a crisis of need, holding back some character poised on the verge of a hideous temptation; or, in another case, supplying the sacred impetus that turns hesitancy into decision for Christ and His Kingdom. For many such things are being done by lowliest souls on intercessory wing.

Or again, on broader enterprise, gliding into the privacy of rulers and statesmen, and by an enlightening impulse, clearing their minds toward the solution of great pressing problems, in wise measures which will be accepted by the national representatives, and go down in history to the end of time. Or, yet further inspired by the Father of all, greatening itself to embrace the soul of this or that nation, and, in the might of Omnipotence, lifting it surely Godward, Christward. For even these wider achievements are not beyond the province of God's intercessory deputies upon earth.

Poetry there is indeed, if scarcely for the pens of human poets. For half the doings of Prayer are inward, and hidden from all but the angels; and in the results that are openly manifest, men see not the subtle prayer-workings behind them. Only the Inspirer of intercession can trace out the currents of cause and effect, and keep a record of these sacred potencies. And it is best thus—

best that these forces for building God's throne among men should be wielded in secret, away from all din of advertisement.

But the day will declare it—in high celestial strains wherein all is transfigured eternally.

And meanwhile each Christ-prompted soul, feeling the ache of the whole human problem, and bringing to bear upon it, by prayer and supplication, the full energies of God on high, may sometimes hear in the stillness the message: "All heaven is cheering you on."

LINKED FORCES

"I believe in . . . the communion of saints."—*Apostles' Creed.*

VIII

LINKED FORCES

From the foregoing studies we have learnt that true prayer involves *the linking of human energy with Divine potency, for the attainment of some result which is desired of God.* Should there not also be a linking together of the prayer-energies of a number of comrades in the Kingdom of God, for the establishment of His sovereignty upon earth ? Is not this to be ever one of the distinctive features of a Christian select circle, or Church ?

It is not without significance that, apart from the occasion of the dedication of Solomon's temple, the prayers recorded in the Old Testament were prayers offered in private. Hence Jesus was describing what was almost the only kind of prayer on record in the annals of His nation, when He described it as an exercise for the inner chamber, away from men and alone with God. It was on this wise He Himself prayed at length—with one striking exception. And even then, in His great intercessory prayer, the words were uttered as though He were quite alone with the Father.

The model prayer which He taught His disciples was a comparatively new departure, in its suggestions of brotherly communion in supplication, for most of the prayers in the Psalms are individual ones, if here and there lit with intercessory elements, inclusive of the nation, or even of the world in general. And certainly the "tarrying" in His Last Commission—the united "waiting upon the Lord" which He contemplated, and which the wider band of His disciples observed—constituted a new epoch in the history of prayer. Until the rise of synagogue services, community of supplication had scarcely been a characteristic of the Jewish religion, and was singularly absent from the customs of other religions; the solitary exception on record being that grim, blood-stained prayer-meeting of old, whose cry was, "O Baal, hear us!"

But the new departure which our Lord contemplated was a development rather than an innovation in the history of godliness. Community of supplication was to be an addition to, and never a substitution for, all private approach to God. For there is a perpetual emphasis to be laid on the fact that true prayer begins—and continues along considerable stages of its course—as a matter between the individual soul and its Maker.

No one can be aroused to contrition without

feeling, in an important sense, alone in the awful, beneficent Presence. Penitence involves detachment from others. Sins are scarcely half confessed, when confessed in the plural. The sinner must isolate himself from all comradeship in his misdoings. There must be a lonesome sense of unique shamefulness.

Vital godliness begins alone with God, in a great surprise of forgiveness. And its nurture normally demands stated periods of privacy. Every man needs a hermit's cell, where he can be himself and not another; thinking his own thoughts rather than thinking in quotation, or feeling in mimicry of others. He needs some retreat in which he can "possess his soul," and bare his "self's soul" to the gaze of His God.*

It was in such a hermit's cell that those who made our Scriptures received their living messages. And the depth of soul in which Scripture seeds may grow and flourish can only be attained in privacy.

The exigencies of modern life mean that many a man or woman is never literally alone; but it is the first task of a soul that is born of God to find, or to make, some heart-seclusion for itself. And

* "Self's soul" is a venerable phrase found in that parent-version of all Germanic translations of Scripture, the Gothic Bible of Ulphilas.

in this matter each one may expect the Heavenly Father's aid.

Much of the languor and nervelessness of our present-day spiritual life arises from the fact that many church-goers are fain to content themselves with worship in public. They are never by choice alone with God, and have not learned how to fill up the half of an hour in solitude with Him. They have no intimate and special possession of Christ. They have not gained the primal force of Christianity which (as Luther once said) "lies in its possessive pronouns." They have yet to grasp the magic of blessedness which is inherent in the two words "My Lord." They have never allowed their supreme Lover to woo and win them in solitude. They have always been losing themselves in a crowd. And no matters of heart are ever concluded thus.

A Christian congregation is properly the gathering together of a number of Christ's reverent intimates, who each has learned, alone with Him, the "whispered secret of the Lord." If that due preparation for a Church-service has been lacking, at least the result of public worship should be to drive each soul, by a sacred compulsion, into aloneness with Him who hath loved, and given Himself for each.

But always every moment of deepening com-

munion with our redeeming Lord has its corresponding moment of sympathy with those whom He has redeemed. In the realised Presence, the singular ever tends to merge into the plural, the individual into the community. Everywhere, in Christianity, the solitary completes itself in the social.

As the sun rises at sea, it marks out a special path of glory, over the wavelets, to the eye of each several beholder, but its beams are yet all-pervading. The love of God, which particularises upon each soul, as though there were no other specially loved one in the universe, is still an all-pervading love. And something of this attribute of the Father is sure to be caught by each filial soul, until the filial becomes the fraternal also.

The grace of God-in-Christ is too large a thing to be retained except by sharing it with others.

There are legitimately in every human soul two complementary forces: the centripetal, which causes us to isolate ourselves in whatever has become to us an inner retreat for the soul; and the centrifugal, which impels us toward others with whom we may communicate in giving, receiving, and sharing. As to the latter impulse: "When the heart is full it seeks, for a thousand reasons, in a thousand ways, to impart itself." Thus wrote Carlyle in connection with the clubs of the French

Revolution—that drastic overthrow of outworn authority. And the words apply to all who have any arousal of loyalty towards the sublime Authority which has uplifted their souls, and may uplift others, to their destined liberties.

As the two complementary tendencies just quoted are inherent in human nature, we may be sure that any institution planned by our Lord and Master, to perpetuate on earth the life of prayerful godliness, would be one in which these complementary tendencies were recognised and developed.

Forgetting for the moment all the ecclesiastical imperialism which gradually attached itself to the Church of Christ from the early centuries onwards —an imperialism which had its undoubted uses in the long epoch of political disintegration and tardy reconstruction which preceded and followed the break-up of old-world Imperialism—we are dealing with most patent fact when we say that the Church planned by its Founder stood essentially for a society of men and women each in personal touch with Christ, who were also drawn into sympathetic touch one with another. In short, that the Church of Christ was intended to be, and ever should be, a sacred society of *comradeship-in-devotion to a personally realised Christ.*

Our Lord's sketch-definition of His Church, and the only one which the Evangelist quotes, is: a

band of two or three disciples, gathered together in heart, with His presence in the midst (the literal phrase " gathered together in His name," implying a common devotion to Him). This word-sketch was embodied in acted picture-form in the Last Supper of Jesus and His disciples, where all were *companions*, literally eating-together, although certain isolations born of competition marred the gathering from the Master's point of view. This picture-parable was fulfilled in living reality, when the disciples' waiting upon the Lord, with growing realisation of His presence, was consummated in a true interfusion of soul, fifty days later.

The Last Supper was the outward sign and symbol of a spiritual verity of comradeship, not then complete, but soon completed in divinest communion, each with each, and all with God-in-Christ. Thus was born—through community of supplication, and thus must revive—if it is to revive to any convincing reality—the Select Assembly, or Church of Christ on earth.

It has been a too-meagre notion concerning the unifying Spirit of Truth that He is a mere Spirit of Orthodoxy, who leads men towards a certain correct formula, and leaves them there, as the goal of His Divine influence. Nay, His is the Truth *versus* all shame and make-believe. His Truth is the Truth of *reality*. He is a potency which brings

about the reality of all things taught in words and symbols, a potency which produces the *real thing* which Christ has regarded as indispensable, namely the true Holy Communion of Pentecostal grace.

This Holy Communion, this mutual sharing with Christ in God, may perhaps be best described by the use of metaphor and simile.

"The Church" of heart-knit members was Christ's name for a company of musicians who were to render the living Symphony in which He had poured forth His very soul. Already some of His music had been expressed through Nature. "Without Him was not anything made that hath been made." And the world as it came forth from Him was a poem of harmonic suggestions,—

> He has made His creation all anthems,
> Though it singeth them silently.

But this Symphony of His was one of living melody, of a nobler beauty than anything which sky and sea and mountain, and all pleasant vegetation could express. It was His masterpiece, composed in a zeal which consumed Him. It was a revelation of His own infinite passion. The tones of eternal solicitude breathed in its chords. It was to attract and win to Himself the hearts of all men. It was to be resistless when rightly rendered. For this the musicians must one and all gain for them-

selves the very Spirit of music. Otherwise, its interpretation would be marred. And a false interpretation, rendered under His name, were an unthinkable sacrilege.

Filled with the Spirit of music, and in touch with the Composer's own soul, His chosen musicians performed the piece. And never without effect. It cast a spell over thousands, and won their hearts; and proved that it always would win men, when rendered aright.

But in some regions, as time went on, this Symphony was played upon instruments incompletely tuned in themselves, and each untuned to the other. Many of those who formed the orchestra had been too hurried to wait for the tuning before they began, and thus the whole music was spoiled. And they who heard it gained little hint of the mind of the Composer. A discordant caricature was called by His name. Men were repelled by it, rather than won. And He Himself was lightly esteemed, for men judged Him by the performance they heard, and not from the notes in the book. And His name became often a by-word among the many.

We do not treat our great composers thus. An orchestra of untuned instruments for a public performance were, as we have said, quite unthinkable. But when orchestra is spelled *congregation*,

and the Symphony is the living Gospel of the Lord Jesus, then the lack of tuning may not be quite unfamiliar to us. And, instead of discussing the matter under the hackneyed phrase "unhappy divisions," but considering the case of each specific congregation and its particular obligations to manifest to all around the mind of Christ—what shall we say to these things? Must not the term "Holy Communion" be made to include Holy Harmony, where thoughts and emotions, where hearts and souls, are tuned by the indwelling Spirit of Christ, to express the soul of the Master worthily?

As to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper—to use a non-technical term—let each reader continue to hold what he sees to be the best view of the case. There is no attempt here to controvert any accepted aspect of that many-sided institution. But if to the commemoration of that Supper be applied the term "Holy Communion," then the true Sacramental grace must be that which the actual Last Supper expressed in symbol, and which was sublimely manifest when the hundred and twenty disciples of that city were tuned to full harmony with God and with each other in God—a harmony of linked forces, both human and divine.

The true Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a pledge of realised relatedness to Christ, and to those who are Christ's. It is the sign of a sacri-

ficial death, and the symbol of a corporate life. It looks back upon that which makes us *at one* with God ; it looks forward to consummated oneness in God. In its celestial aspect, moreover, it is the symbol and pledge of something that is always existent in the regions of the Divine—the realisation of which should persist, with due aid from above, throughout the work-a-day life. God is no local deity. The Lord Jesus is as near to our life on every occasion as ever He has proved to be on any one occasion. The Throne of Grace is as freely open to us at all times as we have felt it to be at any one time. And so we need to lift our whole life to the point of assurance gained at any one moment which we have deemed specially sacred.

To some of those who realise much blessedness on the occasions of devout participation in the most sacred of ordinances, those occasions resemble the hills which rise suddenly from the dead levels in many alluvial plains. They are sharp contrasts to the ordinary ; they exist in far isolation. They add little to the average height of the region. Whereas, life as a whole was meant to be lifted to the plane of such experiences. There is no part of our existence which we can afford to keep isolate from realised communion with God, or from generous sympathy toward our

fellow men. There is never to be an unlinking from either God or man, but an harmonic contact with both. The true life of manliness is one of godliness and human brotherliness. The life of prayer is a process of tuning, and keeping in tune with God-in-Christ, with all that is godly, and with all that are godly—always, from morn till eve, and round about till dawn.

There are Divine demandings that such harmonic communion should be nurtured and consummated. Enthroned in the region of vast Reality, where harmony is a living force of co-ordination, our God is a great utilitarian, with an exalted use for every chord of soul-music. The City of God on earth is to be literally built of harmony, as though in fufilment of the legend concerning King Arthur's city of Camelot, in which fairy queens

> Came forth from out a sacred mountain cleft,
> Toward the sunrise, each with harp in hand,
> And built it to the music of their harps.*

For, where harmony with God and man prevails, there is God's realm of Fulfilled Desire, in whose

* "Gareth and Lynette." Compare Tennyson's "Titronus":

> "That strange song I heard Apollo sing,
> While Ilion like a mist rose into towers";

and Marlowe:

> "He that built the walls of Thebes,
> With ravishing sound of his melodious harp."

consummation man's highest desires will be more than fulfilled, and the Son of Man Himself satisfied.

In the world of Nature, all things are God's servants, and what we call Evolution is *a divine trend towards living harmony.* In the world of human life, all are meant to catch the same harmonic impulse ; and for any to fail to do so is to miss life's guerdon, and to lose all that is of undying value.

In regard to the broad subject of our possibilities of service in the improvement of the world, and the restoration of all things, let us consider that each one of us is expending his life-force under one or other of the following conditions :

I, in isolation from others ;
I, in union with others ;
I, in partial touch with God and my fellows.
God and we, in full harmonic communion.

Every worker on earth, with muscle, mind, or soul, is somewhere within these four conditions. Progress in the work to be done may sometimes be attained without ascending from one of the lower of these grades to a higher, by the simple putting forth of more energy ; but inspiration and spiritual effectiveness can only be attained by ascending toward the highest of these grades. *Labor omnia vincit* is a good motto, but labour itself can buy

no inspiration, neither the spiritual forces which make labour triumphant. In giving us the first clause of the Model Prayer, the Master gave us as the keynote of life a realised relatedness with God and man, and assumed a linking together with both as the starting-point of each day's enterprise. The world awaits a large and harmonic co-operation of God-inspired soul-forces.

The supreme argument for this is found in the Master's Last Commission—too often misread as a mere roving commission, as though the final word were "Go," rather than "Tarry," but truly a commission of *consolidation as the basis of aggression*—to kindle the fire that is to warm the world, and never with scattered fuel; to wait in mutual touch for the fire-flame of God, and never to cease waiting unitedly upon the Lord, for renewals of the fire Divine.

This supreme argument is seconded by another—the great need of the world, to gain in the midst of its God-forgetting some sacred centres of radiant suasion, filled with the Christ-presence; some Christ-lit communities whose resistless force tends to make goodness winsome, and to make men like God, and earth like unto heaven.

Also, for the security and permanence of the Christ-life among believers in Christ themselves, some association of linked forces is a necessity.

For all around them is a society antagonistic to spirituality and Christliness; and beyond that, a society wherein the flesh and the devil are so frequently joining their forces.

In the days of early Christianity, the compact of adverse forces seemed well-nigh complete. Judaian society was banded together for the support of an extreme bigotry; Greek society for the pursuit of the shallowest nonentities; Roman society for the glorification alike of material power and moral weakness. The transfigured band inaugurated by Christ was subject to influences of archaic legalism, of speculative heresy, of moral corruption. And full soon it fell under the ban of authoritative materialism, being proscribed and persecuted, with a view to utter eradication, by the powers that ruled the world. How could it survive all this, but by becoming a society of associated communities, each of them of close-knit fellowship, and united prayerfulness?

For more than two hundred years (until the edict of Galerius, in the year 311 A.D. *) believers in Jesus were everywhere classed as outlaws. Legally they were "not allowed to exist." It was no crime to injure them; it was the magistrates' duty to exterminate them. And so, the Church

* Prohibiting any interference with Christians, and restoring their places of worship.

members, "being in an agony, prayed all the more with intense earnestness," and unitedness also, for their place of abode was often Gethsemane. Apart from any conception of a world-wide commonwealth of Christ, the exigencies of the times demanded that, menaced by a common persecution, they should conserve their local bands of closest comradeship in supplication. Historians have dwelt on the continued Gethsemane of the early Church, rather than the continuous Gethsemane prayer of those two early centuries. But a future Gibbon, of spiritual discernment, will enlarge on this fact of continued and communal supplication, and the diviner energies thus gained, as being the mightiest of factors in the extension of Christ-devotedness into so many regions of a decadent Empire.

With the edict of Constantine legalising Christianity (313 A.D.), and especially the measures adopted by Constantine for the multiplication of Church members,* the opposing forces changed their aspect, but not their antagonistic nature. A premium was put upon the Christian profession, the necessity for prayerfulness was relaxed, the closeness of Christian fellowship suspended by

* "The Emperor bestowed on each one who professed belief a white robe and twenty pieces of gold—thus adding some twelve thousand adults to the Church in the city of Rome in one year." —BARONIUS, *Annal. Eccl.* 324 A.D.

reason of the heterogeneous masses that now were called Christian. The antagonism was now from unspiritual factors introduced within the Church itself. The widened World-Church included within its own bounds full many un-Christian forces. And, as the ages grew dark, those forces were so much in evidence that " the religious life " became a phrase unapplied to Church membership itself, but solely reserved for those who took vows of separation—partial or absolute—from the life of ordinary Church membership, as though the ordinary Church member were hardly expected to be, in any vital sense, religious. In all ages many have risen above current formulæ, but, nevertheless, we have here a vast devolution from the original Church of Christ under the Apostles, where all the members were " called to be saints," and where a common prayerfulness and fellowship in Christ were assumed as veriest essentials. A revival of these two essentials was evidently necessary in any restoration of the Apostolic Church upon earth.

One great keynote of the historical Reformation was: *Religion as a personal matter 'twixt the lay member of the Church and his God.* The rights of direct access to God and the Scriptures—suspended for centuries—were now restored. There was a revival of individuality, and a considerable

clarification of doctrine. And these gains can hardly be overestimated.

Yet, to make them effectual, in the highest sense—to make the religious life the life of the laity—the full Reformation must ever include the revival of a common prayerfulness, and an ardent fellowship in Christ.

Thus it becomes an interesting fact of Church History, though but recently brought to light,* that in 1727, at Hernhutt in Silesia, Count Zinzendorf organised the Moravian refugees under his care into a number of little societies, or Bands, for the express purpose of prayerful fellowship. These Bands were formed on the basis of close spiritual affinities, and the membership was quite voluntary. The friends in Christ who composed them met at least once a week for mutual encouragement, for confession of failure, and for prayer for each other by name. And for a generation or two after Wesley, such Bands continued to exist among the Methodists of England, in addition to public worship, and "society classes."

Doubtless, in all the Reformed Churches, "they that feared the Lord," or loved Him with the love born of Gospel realisations, "spake one to another," on the things nearest their heart. And there was indeed no reason why a condition of prayerful

* By Godfried Schmidt, in 1910.

fellowship, which so much resembled the condition of primitive Church circles, should not have been statedly introduced into all the Reformed Churches, under whatever organisation those Churches, as a whole, were governed. For "when the heart is full, it seeks for a thousand reasons, in a thousand ways, to communicate itself." And in the life of godliness it may thereby gain and communicate much stablishment.

In any case, he who would live the life of prayer —that great essential of vital Christianity—should seek and find for himself a circle of comradeship in supplication.

The earnest Christian who mingles freely with his fellows is sure to be conscious of the daily impact of characters to whom the spiritual realm is scarcely more substantial than fairydom, and to whom such a phrase as "the prayer life" is an outlandish term, connoting nothing familiar in the whole of their universe. The man who cleaves to the spiritual and prayerful, as to his home, will, as the world goes now, be respected in the end for any good qualities he may display in secular regions; but as to that inner life of devotion, which has become all-important to him, he is likely to be regarded by the generality, and perchance by many who "go to church," with a superior tenderness, as being somewhat of an explicable curiosity.

Foreign to himself will the way seem at times, and a foreigner to many will he seem all the time. For the spirit of the age, while recognising the inevitability of church-services, even as the Chinese recognise the inevitability of foreign treaty-ports; and owning the desirableness of profiting by every secular boon of Christianity, even as the Chinese the desirableness of profiting by every element of foreign learning;—still holds as its definite policy the delimiting of the *authority*, the actual lordship, of Christ to church-services, even as the Chinese the definite policy of delimiting the *authority* of the foreigner to his treaty-ports. For is it not true of our modern society throughout Christendom that it abounds in congeries and combines, each with its *esprit de corps*, for the tacit purpose of making it "the correct thing" to own the Lord Jesus as no sort of ultimate authority, and prayerfulness as no sort of daily necessity? And the subtle breath of this *zeitgeist* is a penetrative poison to all who offer to it no strenuously antiseptic resistance.

Certainly, "he who will live godly in Christ Jesus" must make good his determination to do so whether he gain any spiritual comradeship or not. In choosing godliness, of which prayerfulness is such an integral part, he has chosen the life of normal manliness; for all godlessness is essentially

abnormal upon God's earth. He has chosen the Norma towards which all else must tend. The scheme of society is to be moulded to his manner of living. He has to set the pace for the world. The inertia of indifference must in no wise cause him to suspend his sacred quest. He must persevere, and gain full continuity of progress, if for no other reason than that a condition of stopping and starting again means a far greater consumption of energy—with little result, than is required for a continual impetus—with much Christian influence diffused around.

But, strong in the Lord as he may become, in his solitude of soul, and never abjectly dependent upon any human help whatever, he will still welcome the aid of that fellowship in prayer which is part of Our Father's plan for all His children. That plan is one of loving-kindness to the individual, but is based upon wider considerations—the exceeding value of linked forces for the instalment of His Kingdom on earth.

Christian prayer, however private may be its beginnings, always suggests some form of unitedness in supplication. Of this the New Testament depicts two varieties: one, of actual meeting together of Christians for prayer; the other, of the gathering together of Christian prayers from a distance.

1. From the time of the Ascension of Jesus, and those ten days when many disciples, both men and women, frequented a certain upper room, the prayer-meeting—whenever it has approached the model thus set—has been an institution of surpassing value, not only for the mutual stablishment of those who have met, but as a truly dynamic impetus to the fortunes of the Kingdom.

In some wonderful way, a true prayer-meeting, in which all are "of one accord in prayer and supplication," exhibits in spiritual regions the principle of the hydraulic press in mechanics—where every pound of pressure applied to one square inch becomes a pound of pressure upon every square inch. Every impact of Divine prayer-force impinging on any one heart becomes an impact of force in every heart in the charmed circle.

That being so, it must surely be a small and strange Christian congregation which cannot be made to furnish fifty or a hundred volunteers who, in earnest for the sovereignty of their Master, will maintain a meeting so truly apostolic, and make it a chief event of the week, to the great advancement of the Sunday services; which thereby become true *services* rendered to God, and to men in their drawings toward God; and which may mightily advance the Kingdom of God, wherever the stream of united prayer-force is directed.

2. It was ever the aim of St. Paul, by means of his letters, to form or to conserve inner-circle prayer-leagues among his intimate friends. The result he looked for was far more than the cultivation of intercessory sympathy, considered as such. He anticipated a great accretion of dynamic force, for his own use as ambassador of the Kingdom, and for that Kingdom of Christ generally.

He says most earnestly: "I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye wrestle together with me in your prayers to God for me" (Rom. xv. 30); especially "that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified" (2 Thess. iii. 1). And in the words: "Ye also helping together on our behalf by your supplications; that the gift bestowed on us *by means of many*, thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf" (2 Cor. i. 11), he evidently refers to a cumulative result from the conflux of many united prayers.

Let us consider the enhanced possibilities of many prayers in one.

If prayer be born of the Divine desires, which are essentially those of an infinite generosity of benevolence, then the more we pray in touch with others, the more shall we be filled with Divine love, and the more will our praying be prayer indeed. In every accession of sacred sympathy there is a

closer union with the God of Eternal Sympathy. And God can work most readily through prayer of that godliest sort. But the principle involved lies deeper than this. It is that of a definitely cumulative value in the united prayers of many. And this value may be conceived mechanically, without any detriment to the sacredness of the subject—which is, indeed, one of spiritual dynamics. The illustration of the hydraulic press has already been used. And there are others available for the elucidation of the subject.

1. If intercessory prayer may be likened to the reflection of a mirror which catches the rays of the sun and projects them to places in shade, where the sun does not reach directly, it is obvious that two or more mirrors reflecting the light upon a given spot will project more light than one solitary mirror.

On these same lines of simple multiplication it has been said, with a change of metaphor: "The number of coupled-up battery cells must be increased. We need more intercessors if we are to have greatly increased force. The variety of human want and woe, and the wide territory to be covered by intercession—these and other like considerations demand multiplied forces." *

2. But a further consideration arises, a new

* A. T. Pierson, *Missionary Review of the World*, 1903.

element of intensive multiplication, when we are dealing with coupled-up souls rather than reflectors or battery cells. It has been pointed out in a previous work * that, even in the realm of physics, twice one may be more than two, if each coupled unit increases the intensive value of the other. Two ordinary candles burning in isolation will produce a total light of two candle-power; but two flames, each of one candle-power, burning in closest proximity, will, by their mutual aid, yield a total light of something more than two candle-power—as in the duplex burner. And if, instead of two flames being merely brought near together, they are combined in one circular flame—as in the Argand burner—our "twice one" makes three, four, or even five.

The literary works or colloquial proverbs of all lands, from China to Peru, bear witness to the vastly added powers of hearts made voluntarily one in a robust comradeship. In China, indeed, a whole volume of philosophy might be expanded from the sayings of more than a score of ancient writers upon the idea of *oneness*, whether it be a metaphysical unification of the powers of the universe, or the concentration into oneness of the many faculties of a human mind, or the blending in unity of the inner energies of choice friends. In

* *In Touch with Reality*, pp. 322–3.

all these cases the word *one* (written as a simple horizontal stroke) is magnified into a symbol of almost divine significance, with the ever-underlying suggestion that where there is absolute unification there is to be found some display of omnipotence. Sound philosophy indeed, as interpreted by Christianity!

On the point immediately before us, we have such sayings as: "Two hearts in one can break the bars of brass"—so as to open the door of unlimited possibility. For in such union there is not only, as Goethe expresses it, "the immense strengthening of an opinion on any matter when that opinion is adopted by a fellow creature"; and not only a mutual enheartenment for any great enterprise, but an actual accretion of working power towards the fulfilment of that enterprise.

Among savage tribes in all ages, and those tribes of a higher grade which we call "barbarians," who have had little or no conception of individual personality, there has been as a rule the merging of all considerations in that of the tribal unit, and hence their powers of resistance to natural hardship or to foes of the tribe; and not infrequently, the rise of faculties tending toward progress and civilisation. It was in the power of tribal unification, as a primary factor, that many of these peoples became the civilised nations of to-day.

And with us, whose conceptions of individuality are so definitely held, "the most complete individual independence, together with the most moral intimate community of life and action" is the condition of highest achievement, both individual and corporate.

To every soul that tenants a human body belongs the gift of individuality. He is a being with a final sum-total which marks him off from any other being. In extreme cases he may, if he choose, gain an approximate self-containedness which shall render him largely independent of others. Or he may keep himself aloof from his kind in a condition of unblessed selfishness. But his full powers of personality are to be gained by a willing surrender to that which is best in others, or to such altruism as shall minister to the best in others. His development will be determined by the commerce of personality, in things that are best and worthiest.

A tribe of men may live in self-contained isolation from all kindred tribes, but will make little advance towards full civilisation thus. A nation gains its higher individuality through a reasonable intercourse with other nations; through the literal exchange of commodities, and the interplay of thought and sympathy with other nations. These latter, especially, may move it on to noble

ends. Every nation is enriched in proportion to its sympathy with that which is best in all other nations. And every individual is capable of being enriched in like manner. For sympathy includes both receptiveness and outflow. And, on the one hand, man is what he appropriates and makes his own, and, on the other, he is what he radiates forth from the centre of his being.

Personality may be dissipated in either a senseless crowd or a soulless solitude. It is enriched in proportion to the strength and directness of the moral relations established with others. It may gain from every moral gain attained by others. It will gain from every moral gain it seeks to communicate to others. Its power lies in sharing.

A full Christian personality is one which, enjoying a supreme intercourse with God in Christ, has been developed through sharing in the spiritual gains of others, and by sharing its own spiritual gains with others. No longer a competing personality, whose gains must be hoarded, and guarded from others, its hold upon the highest spiritual treasures, and upon God Himself, is the more firmly established the more it is shared. For those treasures are man's universal birthright in Christ, and God is Love, infinite and universal. His Personality and its forces are too great for the grasp of any one soul in isolation from the

rest. God needs a large room for the display of His utmost energies.

God is eminently Self-bestowing—up to the measure of the capacity and preparedness of men. The great sea flows in greatly, wherever there is a great inlet for it. Nothing but a broad channel is needed to turn the Sahara itself into an inland sea. And God is ever seeking a great inlet to the heart of humanity at large. Personality must become community before any congregation can manifest to the world around the fulness of God.

When the risen Christ breathed upon His disciples and said to each, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," doubtless each one received the infinite God up to the measure of his individual capacity and preparedness; but the band of disciples was not sufficiently unified—in sacred soul-union—to receive the Divine fulness up to the measure of their collective capacity.

Starting with a common devotion to a living Christ, and a common glow of His spiritual Presence, after the Ascension—two elements in the initial stage of preparedness which must be gained by every band of Christians who desire to glorify God on earth—there was such prayer and supplication in common, such united waiting upon the unifying Presence, that in the end a hundred souls became as one great soul, and the God of all

power and might found scope within and around that band. They had joined their forces of ardent receptivity, and Omnipotence gained a royal welcome in their midst. And who can doubt that, given a like preparedness, among any modern hundred or more disciples of Christ, the King of Glory will come in, with all His train, through the uplifted gates, into His living home, and work wonders of regal power from thence ?

It was for this the Master prayed " that they all may be one ; even as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou didst send me " (John xvii. 21), with a single congregation in view, as the basis of a wider communion. And that prayer was answered, as regards that one congregation, some fifty days later, after the members of that congregation had learned to link their prayer-forces.

Men have cherished, in a somewhat mechanical fashion, the ideal of a Church one and indivisible everywhere. The lesson of all Old Testament localisation, and thus of all local priesthood, is that for a Church to be one and indivisible everywhere, it must first be one and indivisible somewhere. It must be a collective approach, through unifying prayer, to the One and Indivisible God-in-Christ, on the part of each hundred

and more—on the part of each congregation —which is to usher in any wider union of the several congregations and denominations of Christendom.

We must begin where our Master begun. Otherwise we might unite all Christendom into one "communion," and gain no more complete heart-unity than was exhibited at the Last Supper, where there was still a spirit of separatism, of strife and emulation (Luke xxii. 24). It was an eminently spiritual union which our Lord required, and for which He prayed after that Supper.

How far the individual tendencies of later ages have been warranted, and how far they will merge into one great communal tendency, in the various Churches and Communions; how far the local colourings will be lost, and all the many tints become fused into one glory beneath the noonday sun, is still a matter of uncertainty. But wherever two or three prayerful souls are gathered together, in full unity, with Christ in the midst, there is found, in germ and nucleus, the Church one and indivisible, the communion of saints, the community of linked prayer-forces, and the home of the infinite God.

Thus, from among the various congregations of Christians everywhere, the Master is calling His

own to combine their prayer-energies—as did the faithful of old—and by this means, assisting all other means, and ever remaining the chief means of all, a world-wide Commonwealth of Christ will yet solve the whole human problem.

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